

WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE DELAY OF THE 79TH DIVISION
CAPTURING MONTFAUCON DURING THE MEUSE-ARGONNE
OFFENSIVE IN WORLD WAR I?

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Military History

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE DELAY OF THE 79TH DIVISION CAPTURING MONTFAUCON DURING THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE IN WORLD WAR I? by Major Paul B. Mitchell III, 124 pages.

On the opening day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of World War I, the newly-created United States 79th Division was tasked to advance nine kilometers through German-controlled terrain. However, the advance through the first four kilometers, which included the German strong point of Montfaucon, took two days. The slowed advance of the 79th Division is credited with slowing the progress of the entire American Expeditionary Forces' First Army, thus allowing time for Germans to react to the surprise American offensive. Thus, the central research question is: What were the factors that caused the delay of the 79th Division in their capture of Montfaucon? Little research has been completed on this subject, and most historians pinpoint the sole cause as inexperience on the part of the 79th Division. Therefore, an analysis will be conducted which takes into account the training received by the 79th Division in the United States, the training received in France, and other factors that influenced the outcome of the battle.

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ACRONYMS

AEF	American Expeditionary Force
BAR	Browning Automatic Rifle
BG	Brigadier General
BN	Battalion
COL	Colonel
CPT	Captain
FA	Field Artillery
GEN	General
HQ	Headquarters
INF	Infantry
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJ	Major
MG	Major General
NCO	Non Commissioned Officer
PVT	Private
SGT	Sergeant
U.S.	United States
WWI	World War I

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The City's Streets Aglow With Flags; Citizens Hasten to Put Out the Stars and Stripes After the President's Proclamation.

— *New York Times*, 7 April 1917

A New Liberty Bell; Rung in Independence Hall to Notify Philadelphia That War Is On.

— *New York Times*, 7 April 1917

The 7 April 1917 edition of the *New York Times* heralded the declaration of war against Germany as the excited cries of a nation eager to enter the fighting in Europe. For supporters of the military preparedness movement, it was the confirmation of what they had been advocating for years: the U.S. military would have to grow from the seventeenth-largest army in the world to a first-rate fighting force capable of fighting a modern war on the Western Front. To make this a reality, the United States would need to massively increase the size and ability of her Army through recruitment, organization, and training of Soldiers. The result of these efforts was a four million man strong Army, grown in just over a year from a force numbering slightly over 200,000. Many of the Soldiers in this Army, the products of a hastily formed military equipped by an ill-prepared industry, would take to the fields of France and Belgium with little more than an introduction to military life. The U.S. Soldiers of 1918 were generally unprepared to face the challenges facing them, and led by those with little more experience than themselves. It was in this environment that the 79th Division was born.

Historians have blamed the failure of the 79th Division to capture Montfaucon on the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive solely on its lack of experience. However,

they have largely overlooked the extreme difficulty of the task of the 79th and tended to label the singular cause of failure as lack of training, with no further comments nor a thorough analysis. Such was the case with the dismissive writings of Lieutenant General James Harbord, who wrote of the delay the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, “The most distant and perhaps most difficult objective in this attack was given the 79th, which had never been under fire. Such things had to be.”¹

Scope

This thesis is limited in scope to the factors that directly contributed to the delay in the 79th Division and their capture of Montfaucon. Therefore, the focus shall be on the training received in the United States, followed by the training received in France, and concluding with a narrative and accompanying analysis of the performance and outside influences on the 79th and their capture of Montfaucon on 26-27 September 1918.

The foundation of the 79th Division, its inception and initial training in the United States, is the subject of chapter two. This chapter begins with the creation of the division, a look at the background of its leadership, and finally a narration and analysis of the training conducted while at Camp Meade. A special emphasis is placed on the training of the infantry of the division, however, machine gun and artillery training is covered as well. In the analysis of training, the doctrine and tactics of the time are taken into account and used as the baseline for analysis of training.

The third chapter, training in France, serves as the second and final chapter discussing the training received by the men of the 79th prior to their entry into combat.

¹James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1936), 434-35.

The chapter begins with an overview of the intended training program for all American Expeditionary Force (AEF) divisions, then transitions to infantry, machine gun, and artillery training received by the 79th Division and 57th Field Artillery Brigade. This training was a combination of continuation of training received by Soldiers stateside as well as the inclusion of more complex tasks, such as the integration of signal operations into infantry training.

The fourth chapter, the battle for Montfaucon itself, builds upon the narration and analysis of training of the previous two chapters. The chapter begins with an explanation and analysis of the planning of the operation, then moves to discussion and analysis of the terrain and enemy faced by the 79th. After this, narration and analysis of the actions of the 79th Division in battle begins, as well as descriptions of the progress of adjacent divisions. During this narration, special emphasis is placed upon the events which stalled the 79th in their advance. The final analysis is a discussion of corps and army level failures and their contribution to the slowed advance of the division.

Just as important as what this thesis will cover is what it will not cover. In the discussion of artillery, this thesis will not cover the actions in battle of the 79th Division's artillery brigade, the 154th; rather, it will focus on the 57th Field Artillery Brigade of the 32nd Division, as well as the 147th Field Artillery Regiment of the 41st Division. Common practice in the AEF was for divisional artillery brigades to separate from their parent divisions for training in France, often not to rejoin them until after the Armistice. This was the case with the 79th Division and the 154th Field Artillery Brigade. In support of the 79th Division during their first action on 26-27 September 1918 were the 57th Field Artillery Brigade, the 147th Field Artillery Regiment, two batteries of Coastal

Artillery, as well as French artillery. Due to a limited availability of sources and the limited roles of the French and Coastal Artillery, a focus shall be set on the 57th Field Artillery Brigade and the 147th Field Artillery Regiment. It is of interest to note that the artillery organic to the 79th Division, the 154th Field Artillery Brigade, did not engage the enemy nor see action at the front lines.

Secondly, no analysis of the effectiveness of medical support in the 79th Division will be conducted. As per the authorization of the timeframe, divisions were equipped with ambulance companies and field hospitals. However, due to the short timeframe of the battle for Montfaucon, they were not able to return Soldiers to duty in time to affect the fight. While influenza and other outbreaks did quarantine Soldiers during training and had some impact on Soldier readiness prior to 26 September 1918, the effectiveness of the medical support was not a key factor nor did it make a major impact in the battle for Montfaucon.

The eventual combination of the difficulty of the mission, disposition and strength of the enemy, terrain on which the battle was fought, and lack of training all contributed to the shortcomings of the 79th Division in their first battle. This thesis will attempt to analyze these key areas and present an argument that the delay in the advance of the 79th could have been predicted prior to the first shots of the battle being fired.

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING AT CAMP MEADE

The story of the 79th Division's training in the United States begins with the birth of its home, Camp Meade. After the declaration of war against Germany on 6 April 1917, the U.S. government established sixteen training camps throughout the United States to train the Army for combat on the Western Front. To form Camp Meade, the U.S. government appropriated 4,000 acres of land near Annapolis Junction, Maryland, for the purpose of training draftees from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Washington, D.C. area. On 13 August 1917, one month after construction began on Camp Meade, the 79th Division was born.² As part of the newly created National Army, the 79th had no standing equipment or personnel. The division would have to be built from scratch, and construction began from the top down.

This chapter will discuss the formation of the 79th Division, as well as the training of the men and the artillery that would fight with them against the Germans on 26-27 September 1918. It will cover their formation, sources and quality of leadership, as well as type and quality of training of their infantry, machine guns, and artillery while in the United States. To serve as a reference point, training is compared to U.S. Army doctrine from 1917-1918. It will conclude with an analysis of the training conducted and explanation of how the manpower decisions made at higher Army levels resulted in the 79th deploying to France unfit for combat operations.

²History Committee of the 79th Division Association, *History of the Seventy-Ninth Division AEF During the World War, 1917-1919* (Lancaster, PA: Steinman and Steinman, 1922), 17.

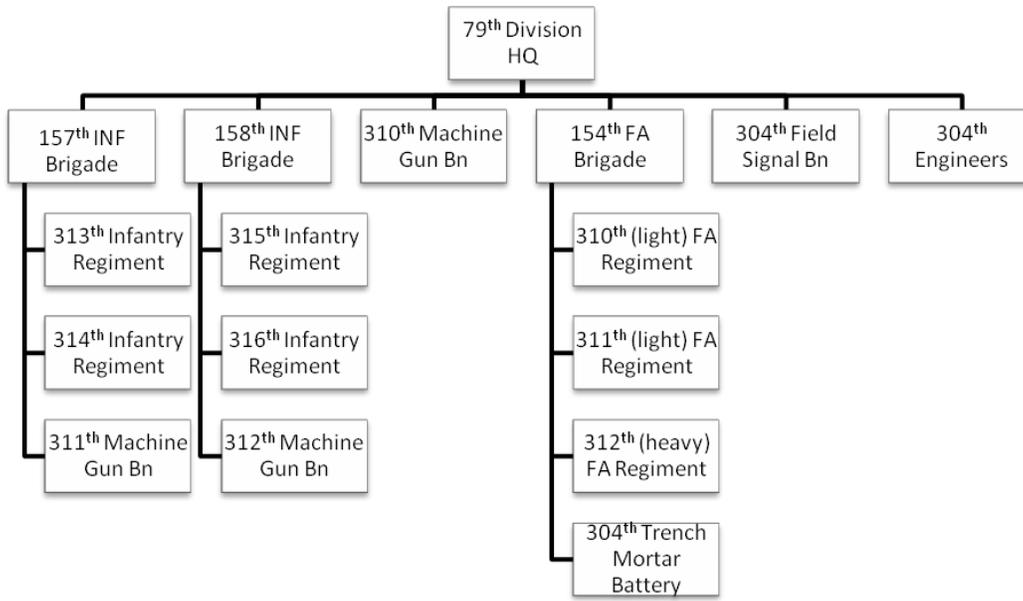


Figure 1. Table of Organization for 79th Division

Source: Created by author using data from the United States Army Center for Military History, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions* (1948; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1988), 319.

Selected to build and lead the 79th Division was Brigadier General (BG) Joseph E. Kuhn, a Regular Army Engineer with an impressive military record. BG Kuhn graduated first in his class from West Point in 1885 and had commanded at the company and twice at the battalion level, along with several posts as an instructor. During the Russo-Japanese war, Kuhn served as an observer with the Japanese Army, after which he contributed to the official U.S. Army report on the conflict. Most notable of all of his assignments were those that took him to Germany. From December 1914 to December 1916, he served in Germany first as part of the military mission to Germany and then as the military attaché to Berlin. It was during his time as the military attaché when he observed the German army in the field on both the Eastern and Western Fronts. He also

had an opportunity to discuss tactics and military strategy with Kaiser Wilhelm II while attending maneuvers in Germany in 1906.³ With no prior service as an infantryman, men such as Kuhn, along with his peers with little to no infantry experience, may have never risen to command at such a high level; however, the need to grow the Army necessitated competent leadership, a quality that Kuhn possessed.

Kuhn's regimental and brigade commanders, the colonels and brigadier generals of the 79th Division, were an experienced group of officers, most with service that stretched back to the previous century. Although well-versed in the ways of the Army, if not for the war, they may not have ever served at such high levels. To support a 20,000 percent growth in manpower in under two years, the U.S. Army promoted officers who probably would have retired no higher than major to colonel or above and placed them in command. One such example was Colonel (COL) Otho Rosenbaum, the commander of the 315th Infantry Regiment. COL Rosenbaum was an 1894 West Point graduate who had fought as an infantryman in Cuba and the Philippines, achieving the rank of major in the pre-WWI Army. In August 1917, Rosenbaum received his promotion to colonel and assumed command of the 315th Infantry Regiment. Less than one year later, Rosenbaum received his promotion to Brigadier General and assumed command of the 315th's parent unit, the 158th Infantry Brigade. By the time of the Armistice, BG Rosenbaum had spent 22 years as a company-grade officer, two years as a field-grade officer, and under one year as a general officer. Had it not been for the war, it is likely Rosenbaum would have retired as a major and never commanded above the battalion level.

³Ibid., 8.

The junior field-grade officers, the majors who served as battalion commanders, also tended to have military experience dating back to pre-war times. Like the colonels above them, they were generally experienced, some of them with ten years or greater of service. Even before attrition in combat promoted officers to positions they may not have otherwise been afforded, the majors of the 79th Division were either first lieutenants or captains at the outbreak of war in 1914. In some cases, they were accomplished men in civilian life with little to no military experience. This was the case in the 313th Infantry Regiment, where two of the three infantry battalion commanders were civilians prior to the United States' declaration of war.⁴ Some battalions fared slightly better, as was the case with the commander of the 311th Machine Gun Battalion, Major (MAJ) Charles DuPuy. DuPuy, although not a seasoned Army veteran, had trained at Camp Plattsburg, New York in 1915 and 1916, the second year in which he trained with machine guns. After the United States' declaration of war, he served as the Assistant Instructor of Infantry at Camp Niagara for the First Officers' Training Camp.⁵ Overall, the numbers of experienced officers in the regiments that formed the 79th Division were few, for in a magazine article MG Kuhn submitted in early 1918, he generalized that three to five officers in each regiment had previous Regular Army experience.⁶ Although this suggests that the 79th was neglected in its initial allocation of officers, this lack of experience and

⁴Henry C. Thorn, Jr., *History of the 313th U.S. Infantry, "Baltimore's Own"* (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1920), 11.

⁵Charles M. DuPuy, *A Machine Gunners Notes: France, 1918* (Pittsburg: Reed and Witting Company, 1920), 19-20.

⁶Kuhn was promoted from Brigadier General to Major General on 5 August 1918. Joseph E. Kuhn, "Discipline as the Foundation for Military Training," *National Service* (February-March 1918): 73.

excess of advancement in rank and responsibility was typical for the time, not only for the 79th, but for the entire Army.

As for the company-grade officers, they were relatively inexperienced and promoted to their rank and position rapidly. Prior to the entry of the United States into the war, the officer corps of the Army consisted of 5,791 Regular and 3,199 National Guard officers, well short of the approximately 200,000 officers required to lead an army of four million.⁷ Newly minted lieutenants and captains, graduates of the First Officers' Training Camp at Fort Niagara, New York., were sent to Camp Meade to fill the company-grade officer structure. The first of these officers arrived prior to the completion of the camp on 15 August 1917.⁸ COL Claude Sweezey was serving as the senior instructor at the First Officers' Training Camp when he learned of his appointment as the commander of the 313th Infantry Regiment. With this knowledge, he hand-picked lieutenants he trained to form a majority of his regiment's company-grade leadership.⁹ His ability to evaluate and select his company-grade officers gave him an advantage over other regimental commanders within the division, and there is no question he took what he considered the most talented and capable from the bunch. However, his experience illustrates that although he was able to hand-pick lieutenants and some captains for his regiment, he was still stuck with officers that were mostly civilians with little to no military experience other than the previous three months of training. Considering that the sixteen officer

⁷Leonard P. Ayres, *The War with Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 21.

⁸Historical board of the 315th Infantry, ed., *The Official History of the 315th Infantry U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, 1920), 20.

⁹Thorn, 11.

training camps had received 40,000 civilians three months earlier for training by the 10-12 Regular Army instructors at each camp, training was conducted at a ratio of 209 to 250 candidates per instructor, a ratio far less than ideal.¹⁰ The result of this training was a selection rate of approximately 60 percent to 70 percent for commissioning, so it can be safely said that the quality of second lieutenant that graduated the First Officers' Training Camp (as well as the second and third) was much lower than the quality of a second lieutenant in 1914. With no experienced manpower base to build from outside of what the Regular Army and National Guard would give up, minus a few Plattsburg Camp graduates, nowhere was the lack of experienced officers felt more than in the National Army.

Although a majority of company-grade officers within the division were new to the military, approximately 16,000, or 8 percent, of all U.S. Army officers commissioned during the Great War were from the enlisted ranks.¹¹ One such officer, Captain (CPT) Theodore Schoge, commanded F Company, Second Battalion, 314th Infantry Regiment. In F Company's unit history, Schoge was

about forty-eight years of age, of short and stocky build. Although German was predominant in his nationality, I doubt whether the captain himself was certain of his ancestry. Uneducated except in Army affairs, he spoke rather brokenly with the grammatical mistakes of a child... Having served in Cuba, Mexico, the Philippines, and Panama, most of the time as a First Sergeant or "top-kicker," he was the regimental authority for old Army tricks, Army lore, and "hard" Army sense.¹²

¹⁰William Addelman Gano, *The History of the United States Army* (1942; repr., Ashton, MD: Eric Lundberg, 1964), 465.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 22.

¹²Arthur H. Joel, *Under the Lorraine Cross* (Charlotte, MI: The Charlotte Tribune, 1921), 8.

The description goes on to say, “What mattered a gruff voice and a rough appearance when a man had a big heart, a great fund of common sense, and an unlimited supply of Army knowledge, and was loyal to his men and officers? He could command the loyalty of men as could few others in the division.”¹³ If not for the outbreak of war, men such as CPT Schoge may never have infiltrated the educated class of the officer corps.

Considering that the alternative to an uneducated, coarse, experienced Soldier such as Schoge was a newly minted officer with three months experience, the Soldier who described his commander was clearly in favor of the former.

Eventually the need for the Army to produce more officers to lead its growing force led to the creation of officer schools at training areas throughout the United States, including at Camp Meade. Company and battery commanders in the 79th Division identified men who they believed were capable of serving as officers and forwarded their lists up the chain of command for final approval by MG Kuhn. In the nine months it spent at Camp Meade, the 313th Infantry Regiment provided at least 59 recruits to attend officers’ training.¹⁴ The officers’ school at Camp Meade was not a typical officers’ training camp, for a majority of those who graduated were not expected to immediately receive a commission. The true intent of these officers’ training camps was for the graduates to serve as, “a reserve force eligible for promotion as vacancies occurred

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴In order to generate the maximum amount of candidates, company and battery commanders were given a quota of men to recommend for officer’s training. As for the result of this training, no records were found indicating how many of the recruits received a commission and went on to serve as officers, either within the division or in another division. E. Lester Muller, *The 313th of the 79th in the World War* (Baltimore: Meyer and Thalheimer Publishers, 1919), 35-36.

among the officers by transfer, sickness, accident, wounds, or death.”¹⁵ As new divisions formed throughout the Army, graduates of this training were pulled from their units, commissioned, and sent off to fill vacant company-grade officer ranks.¹⁶ If their training never resulted in a commission, the schooling was not viewed as a waste; they could still contribute to the Army as more capable junior enlisted Soldiers or NCOs.

A few weeks after the arrival of the graduates of the First Officers’ Training Camp, what were to become the first of the NCOs of the 79th Division arrived. Regular Army Soldiers, who possessed some level of military experience, were removed from their units and dispersed throughout the National Army to serve as the foundation of the NCO corps. Previously, the Army War College had developed a plan to “allocate no more than 961 Regular Army enlisted men to each planned National Army division.” They eventually adjusted this plan, since “the adjutant general soon demonstrated that in fact there were not enough available Regulars to meet even that figure.”¹⁷ The initial plan would have destroyed the Regular Army as a fighting force, for dramatic reductions in manpower to fill posts as trainers were already weakening its fighting strength. For the National Army and the 79th Division, the number of Regular Army Soldiers they received was much lower than the proposed 961. In September 1917, the 79th Division received 37 enlisted men from the Regular Army. It was soon evident that the Regular Army had sent its scraps, and less than half of these men were declared capable of

¹⁵Ibid., 36.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 372.

serving as NCOs within the division, the remainder being sent back to their former units.¹⁸ Although experienced in the ways of the Army, albeit possessing varying levels of experience, the qualities necessary for leadership were just not present.

The shortage of NCOs was not unique to the 79th Division, it was an issue faced throughout the Army. Army leadership understood the lack of experienced NCOs Army-wide, as demonstrated by the guidance listed in the publication *Infantry Training*. Under a discussion of avoiding micromanagement, it acknowledges that due to lack of an experienced NCO corps, officers must, “give personal attention to individual instruction and to that of the squad and platoon, in order that the training may proceed along right lines and due progress be made.”¹⁹ Once again, the lack of experienced leadership presented a problem. In this the 79th was not alone, for every other division in the National Army, and many in the Regular Army and National Guard, faced the same problem.

Prior to the arrival of the first recruits, the company-grade officers, who would serve as their primary trainers, continued training in close order drill, staff training, and drawing maps of the training area, thus developing and honing their own military skills before they would teach the new recruits.²⁰ In mid-September 1917, the first of the recruits that would form the 79th Division arrived. Coming mainly from eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., they were products of the wartime

¹⁸Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, eds. *The Official History of the 315th Infantry U.S.A.* (Philadelphia: Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, 1920), 23.

¹⁹United States War Department, *Infantry Training* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 9.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

expansion of the Army; plucked straight from civilian life. According to the *History of the 316th Regiment*, the new arrivals were a group of, “farmers, miners, steel-workers, mechanics, clerks, village cut-ups and ministers’ sons, teachers, and laborers unsullied by contact with the alphabet--all sorts and conditions of men, all somewhat dazed by this sudden change in the current of their even lives.”²¹ Judging by the description above, it can be inferred that there was little to no military experience in the new recruits. This was typical of most recruits received in 1917 and in at least one way positive: their leadership, with only months of experience, could gain some degree of respect from these fresh recruits with none.

With the facilities to begin training and the trainees present, the 79th Division began training for its eventual service on the Western Front. To assist in training a division, the Army published *Infantry Training* in August 1917, as well as several other publications, to assist commanders in their role as primary trainers. Within *Infantry Training* is a sixteen week recommended training regimen for recruits (reference Figure 2), which appears to have been generally followed by the trainers at Camp Meade.²² In order to give maximum flexibility to division commanders, the training guidance published in *Infantry Training* was not mandatory; rather, division commanders were able to deviate as necessary to train their formations.²³

²¹Carl Edward Glock, *History of the 316th Regiment of Infantry in the World War: 1918* (Philadelphia, 1930), 10.

²²The training published in *Infantry Training* was a sixteen-week program, and it appears as though a majority of the training that is described was covered, at one time or another, with the recruits at Camp Meade. Examples confirming this conclusion are spread throughout the remainder of this chapter. *Infantry Training*, 20-24.

²³*Ibid.*, 8.

Prior to declaration of war, United States doctrine focused on offensive action. This ran counter to the thought of the British and French, who after years of fighting and the losses of millions of lives had lost the offensive spirit and settled into the defensive mindset of trench warfare. In 1914, Ferdinand Foch captured the spirit of *élan* in the French Army, writing that it “no longer knows any other law than the offensive. . . . All attacks are pushed to the extreme . . . to charge the enemy with the bayonet in order to destroy him.”²⁴ By 1917, the cult of the offense had long faded, and the British and French spent a majority of their time in their trenches conducting a defense.

Not only did the commander of the AEF, General (GEN) John Pershing, trumpet the offensive spirit possessed in the American Army, it was the foundation for American doctrine. In the training publication *Combined Training of a division*, it was prescribed that upon penetration of the enemy’s defense, “The greatest possible use of the infantry’s own fire power (should be used) to enable it to get forward, with or without the support of artillery.”²⁵ To the British and French veterans of the Western Front, advance of infantry without the aid of artillery was appalling. However, this did not demonstrate a lack of situational understanding on the part of the Americans; rather, this was their belief in the offense and the practice of “open warfare.”

²⁴Bud Bowie, “H110 - World War I, the Train Wreck of Revolutions” (Lecture, Lewis and Clark Center, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 19 October 2010).

²⁵United States War Department, Training Circular No. 12, *Combined Training of a Division* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 11.

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WEEKLY PROGRAMS.

First week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Articles of War	1	Setting-up exercises; Recruit instruction	6		
Military discipline and courtesy	2	Orders for sentinels	2		
Uniforms and equipment	4	Issue of clothing and equipment	4		
Personal hygiene and care of feet	2	Obligations and rights of the soldier; Lecture	1		
School of the soldier	6	Inspection	2		
School of the squad	10				
Second week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Setting-up exercises; Recruit instruction	4	Bayonet exercise and bayonet combat	3		
Running	1	Sighting, position, and aiming drills, and deflection and elevation correction drills	4		
School of the soldier	4	Making pack and tent pitching	2		
School of the squad	14	Why we are at war; Lecture	1		
Issue of arms	1	Inspection (as directed)	2		
Nomenclature and care of rifle.	2				
Color sentinels, countersigns and paroles, compliments from guards, guarding prisoners and flags	1				
Third week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Setting-up exercises; "Trained soldiers" instruction	4	Sighting, aiming, position, trigger-squeeze exercises, and deflection and elevation correction drills	12		
Running	1	Test of recruits by squad leaders in subjects 1 (b) to (h), inclusive	2		
Bayonet training	4	Inspection (as directed)	2		
School of the squad	12				
Whistle and arm signals	1				
First aid to the wounded	1				
Fourth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Setting-up exercises	4	Methods of employing gases in modern warfare—(1) gas clouds, (2) gas shells; Effect of gas; Lecture	1		
Running and jumping	1	Grenade and bomb warfare; Lecture	1		
School of the squad	12	Inspection; Field kit; Tent pitching	2		
Bayonet combat	6				
Sighting, position, aiming, trigger-squeeze exercises, and gallery practice	12				
Fifth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Physical training	4	Target practice—Continued. Estimating distance. Fire-control instruments: Field glass. Range finder. Mil scale. Sketching (position, road, landscape) and map reading. Signaling. Trench warfare. Marching: To be conducted in connection with march to and from target range.	1		
Bayonet training	4	Antigas instruction	1		
School of the squad, including duties of squad and squad leader, involving target designation, distribution of fire on target, fire discipline, fire direction, and fire control, I. D. R.	4	Field intrenchments; Lecture	1		
Bombing	2	Inspection; Field kit; Tent pitching	2		
Platoon instruction: Drill, close order	3				
Drill in trench and open warfare	3				
Target practice	16				
Firing will be done successively by platoons; the platoons not firing will devote time in instruction in the following subjects:					
Sixth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Physical training	4	Trench construction	4		
Bayonet training	3	Antigas instruction	1		
School of the squad	3	Bombing (hand grenade)	3		
Platoon instruction in close order and trench warfare	3	Military offenses and punishments	1		
Target practice (same as fifth week)	16	Marching (as in fifth week). Inspection (as directed)	2		

Seventh week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Test of squads by platoon leader on subjects 2 (c), (d), (e), (f), (l), (m), (n), and 3	3	Target practice—Continued. By platoons—Continued. Communications. Trench warfare.			
Physical training	3	Antigas instruction. This instruction should now include marching, running, bayonet fighting, rapid loading and aiming, etc., while wearing gas masks	1		
Bombing	2	Prevention of damage by gas to rifles, etc., sentry duties in connection with gas; Use of sprayers and fans for clearing out gases; Lecture.	1		
Bayonet training	3	Marching (as in fifth week). Night work	3		
Platoon instruction in close order and trench warfare	3	Inspection (as directed)	2		
Trench construction	3				
Target practice	16				
By platoons, those not firing to be instructed in—					
Target designation. Finding the range. Distribution of fire. Fire discipline. Fire direction. Fire control.					
Eighth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Physical training	4	Marching (as in fifth week). Bombing	3		
Bayonet training	3	Morale; lecture	1		
Trench and obstacle construction	3	History; European war	1		
Platoon instruction	3	Inspection (as directed)	2		
Antigas instruction	1				
Night work	3				
Target practice	16				
By platoons, platoons not firing as in seventh week.					
Ninth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Tests of squads in subjects 2 (c), (d), (e), (f), (l), (m), (n), 3	3	Bombing (hand and rifle grenades)	2		
School of the company, close order	3	Target practice	16		
Physical training	3	By platoons, platoons not firing as in seventh week.			
Bayonet training	3	Marching (as in fifth week). History; European war; Lecture	1		
Trench work	3	Inspection (as directed)	2		
Antigas instruction	1				
Night work	3				
Tenth week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Tests of platoons in subjects 3 (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) (p, —)	4	Night work	3		
Physical training	2	Intrenching	4		
Bayonet training	2	Target practice	16		
Company in close order and trench warfare	3	By platoon, platoons not firing as in seventh week.			
Antigas instruction	1	Marching (as in fifth week). Trench warfare; Lecture	1		
Bombing (hand and rifle)	2	Inspection (as directed)	2		
Eleventh week.		Hours.		Hours.	
Selection of specialists in the following	4	Bayonet training	2		
Bombers (hand grenade). Grenadiers (rifle grenade). Snipers. Sketchers. Liaison details (signalers, runners, observers, etc). Estimators. Automatic rifle or light machine gun.		Intrenching	3		
Physical training	3	Bombing	2		
		Antigas instruction	1		
		Night work	3		
		Target practice	16		
		By platoon, platoons not firing as in seventh week.			
		Marching (as in fifth week). Inspection (as directed)	2		

United States, Pershing communicated his training recommendation to Soldiers in the United States,²⁶

I therefore strongly renew my previous recommendations that all troops be given complete course in rifle practice prescribed in our firing manual before leaving the United States. Specialty of trench warfare instruction at home should not be allowed to interfere with rifle practice, nor with intensive preliminary training in our schools of soldiers, companies and battalions.²⁷

This belief that the offensive spirit of the infantryman was the key to victory was not only held by Pershing, but by the rest of the Army leadership as well. This also laid the foundation that training in the United States would focus on the offensive vision of American-style open warfare and the realities of living and fighting in the trenches would be taught to Soldiers after their arrival in Europe.

The doctrinal foundation for U.S. Army small arms training that Pershing referred to was the *Small Arms Firing Manual 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917*. This manual, built upon a one year cycle of rifle training during peacetime, was adapted for use in the training camps. Training in *Firing Manual* consisted of mechanical familiarization of the rifle, sighting drills, position and aiming drills, elevation and windage adjustments, gallery practice, distance estimation, practice fire, and collective fire.²⁸ Multiple sources and pictures from Camp Meade describe/show Soldiers with their rifles conducting drill, and there are accounts of work outside of the firing range with their rifles, such as sight

²⁶As the Commander of the AEF, Pershing had not authority to dictate what or how training would be conducted back in the United States and was therefore limited to suggestions and requests.

²⁷“Urges more practice at Camp Wadsworth,” *New York Times*, 5 October 1917.

²⁸United States Army War Department, *Small Arms Firing Manual 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 20-21. Hereafter referred to as *Firing Manual*.

picture training, as outlined in *Firing Manual*.²⁹ Lacking is the mention of gallery practice, which is firing reduced-caliber and reduced-charged rounds at short distances into modified targets, the absence of which appears to be the only deviation from the training prescribed in *Firing Manual*. With the need for specialized rifles and ammunition to conduct gallery practice, it is safe to assume that logistics did not permit this training.

The Army was initially unable to equip every man in the rapidly expanding force with rifles, so it issued what was available. Initial issue began with the Model 1903 Springfield and also the then-obsolete 1898 Krag-Jorgensen, the staple weapon of U.S. Soldiers in the Spanish-American War. By mid-November, NCOs throughout the division received the new U.S. Model 1917, known as the M17, modeled after the British P-14 Enfield.³⁰ During a review by Secretary of War Newton Baker on 22 December 1917, a reporter wrote that “the review brought a gratifying surprise as to small arms...90 percent of the infantry in the review had their rifles.”³¹ At the time of the review in December 1917, sufficient weapons were on hand for drill (and if they weren’t, wooden substitutes could be used) as well as for weapons familiarization and sighting drills. The use of wooden and obsolete weapons ultimately had little effect on the training at Camp Meade, for the rifle ranges were not completed until months later. As per an account in the 313th Infantry Regiment, all Soldiers in the regiment received a M17 prior to the

²⁹Glock, 12.

³⁰“Keen Interest in the Returns,” *The Reading Eagle* (Reading, PA), November 15, 1917.

³¹“Draft Army’s first review,” *New York Times*, 30 December 1917.

completion of the rifle range.³² It appears as though the time required to equip the 79th with rifles coincided with the time necessary for the range complex to be completed. Overall, the delay in receiving the rifles for the 79th was a short-term hassle and had little to no long-term effects.

To develop long-range engagement skills, *Firing Manual* prescribed engagement of targets up to 600 yards, as well as elective firing at 800 and 1,000 yards for marksmen and personnel designated as sharpshooters. There were five ranges at Camp Meade, the 100, 200, 300, 500, and 600 yard, which is consistent with ranges in *Firing Manual*. The first account of a regiment firing was the 313th firing on the bayonet assault course in late winter, and there were no accounts of units firing on the rifle range prior to the 313th in March 1918.³³ After that, the ranges were used almost continually by the four infantry regiments of the 79th for one to two weeks at a time until their departure in late June. In a letter to his father, an infantry corporal in the 79th Division wrote, “We shot on five different ranges, the 100, 200, 300, 500, and 600-yard. There were four different positions we had to shoot in, the standing, kneeling and prone positions, and from the

³²Thorn, 13.

³³The exact date of completion of the rifle ranges was not specified, the best source being the diary of George Hentschel, a Soldier in the 314th Infantry Regiment, who wrote that February 11, 1918, was spent digging butts at the range. In an entry on February 18th, Hentschel writes of firing the first shots at the range, but unit histories make no mention of regiments at the range this early, perhaps due to the harsh weather during the 1917-18 winter. The first accounts of personnel firing at the completed range are in March 1918. George E. Hentschel, personal diary while serving in Company G, 314th Infantry Regiment AEF, <http://314th.org/george-hentschel-diary.html> (accessed 6 December 2010).

trench.”³⁴ These positions and distances are consistent with *Firing Manual*, as was the practice of both slow (untimed) fire and rapid (timed) firing conducted by units in the division.³⁵

Throughout the official unit histories and personal accounts, the rifle training conducted at Camp Meade was never referred to in a negative sense, and all seem to concur that the training conducted was quality training and sufficient for their upcoming deployment to France. The 314th Infantry Regiment earning the highest scores in the entire National Army for rapid fire at the 100, 200, and 300 yard ranges further supports this.³⁶ Documents suggest that each regiment spent at least two but perhaps as many as three weeks at the range complex, with one account stating that “Each and every man in the regiment during the last two weeks fired 220 cartridges.”³⁷ In addition to a lack of gallery training, there is no mention of collective marksmanship, which is a company or other-sized unit massing rifle fire at targets. This was not only a shortcoming in the training of the Soldiers, but the leaders as well, for they departed Camp Meade without learning the techniques and benefits of massed fire.

³⁴“Mayor’s Son Enthuses over the Rifle Range,” *The Reading Eagle* (Reading, PA), 8 May 1918.

³⁵The sitting position prescribed for fire in the *Firing Manual* was omitted and firing from the trench is added. This was a necessary deviation, since there is no mention of firing from a trench in the *Firing Manual*.

³⁶ History Committee of the 79th Division Association, *History of the Seventy-Ninth division AEF During the World War: 1917-1919* (Lancaster, PA: Steinman and Steinman, 1922), 35.

³⁷“Mayor’s Son Enthuses over the Rifle Range.”

To augment rifle training and assist in developing and maintaining their offensive spirit, the infantrymen of the 79th drilled and practiced fighting with the bayonet. The foundation for bayonet instruction in the U.S. Army was the March 1917 War College publication *Notes on Bayonet Training: Compiled from Foreign Reports*.³⁸ The manual described bayonet training as a progressive program, beginning with stances, then the practice of movements, and capping off with a bayonet assault course. Although the training received by the men focused heavily on the use of the bayonet as a weapon, when compared to artillery, machine guns, and rifles, it played a relatively minor role on the Western Front. The primary purpose of bayonet training was not to make the men experts of the bayonet, but rather to increase physical fitness and cultivate aggression with them. As described by an Officer in the 313th Infantry Regiment,

A bayonet course, with trenches, and obstacles of various kinds, had been constructed by the men of the regiment and many strenuous hours were spent in running, climbing and stabbing the Boche hung in the frames. The bayonet... was it a wonderfully efficient means of toughening the body, and it helped to inculcate the fighting spirit that lies more or less dormant in every man.³⁹

Although *Notes on Bayonet Training* was based on British practices, the United States appears to have customized their bayonet training. In *Notes* . . . the British example of a bayonet assault course finished with the men entering a trench and engaging in bayonet drills with more “targets” for their bayonets. Accounts of the training at Camp Meade differ slightly, where rather than finishing the course in a trench with bayonet

³⁸Although this was issued by the U.S. Army War College, it was extracted from the 1916 *British Training Manual*. Although the spelling is American English, all of the pictures show men in British uniforms and a sentence in the front of the manual suggests that it was pulled directly from the British.

³⁹Thorn, 13.

training dummies, 79th Division trainees finished by “(entering) into the trenches of the ‘enemy’, from which they fired upon the imaginary second wave of Huns being pressed forward to repel their attack.”⁴⁰ Modifying the course to conclude with rifle firing highlights the importance the U.S. Army placed upon the infantryman and his rifle and the relative little value of the bayonet. With the relative lack of use of the bayonet in actual combat, the true value of bayonet training for the 79th was its physical benefit, the reaction of the men to their officers’ commands, and the fostering of the aggressive, offensive spirit in the hearts of the men.

When referring to schedules or daily routines regarding life at Camp Meade, especially in the diaries of the infantryman, few terms appear more than drill. To the contemporary reader, drill is interpreted as drill and ceremony, such as marching in a parade. For the Soldiers of Camp Meade, drill referred to multiple types of Army training. In a letter to *The Gettysburg Times*, a Soldier in the 316th Infantry Regiment describes a typical day in 1917 Camp Meade,

Drill begins at 7:30 a. m. and continues until 4:30 p. m., with one hour for dinner. . . . The training program is as follows: marching, physical exercises, bayonet charging, war games then marching before mess, the afternoon is devoted to chiefly semaphore (signaling), bomb throwing and manual of arms. The bombs are thrown from real trenches according to present skill will take some time before we are ready to throw effectively ‘over there’.”⁴¹

⁴⁰Muller, 46.

⁴¹The training events described in this passage are further reinforcement of adherence to *Infantry Training*, which called for all of the events listed over the course of an eight-hour day. “With Our Boys at Camp Meade,” *The Gettysburg Times* (Gettysburg PA), 3 December 1917.

The doctrine of the time stated that there were two classes of drill, the first being drill of precision, the second being drill of maneuver.⁴² The drill of precision, the marching type, was initially practiced to instill discipline and to develop a sense of being a part in a collective action. So strong was his belief in the need for discipline, especially in the training of the National Army, that MG Kuhn wrote that training at Camp Meade would “lay more stress on discipline than upon the training in specialties during the early period of the camp; this policy is based on the belief that without discipline training is not only worthless, but slow and difficult.”⁴³ Concurrent to the establishment of a foundation of discipline, drill also assisted in developing the awareness within the men that they were part of a larger, collective effort. With this foundation established, the transition to the drill of maneuver could begin.

Infantry training at Camp Meade was not only for individual Soldiers but for leaders as well. Within the 313th Infantry Regiment, tactical problems were “given to the men to work out. Companies and battalions, and later the entire regiment, split so that half would represent the enemy and half the American force. . . . The men were taken out for maneuvers, which lasted for several days.”⁴⁴ This was common throughout the division, and multiple accounts discuss frequent tactical exercises of infantry units up to the regimental level conducting maneuvers, not only on Camp Meade, but also “attacks

⁴²Infantry Training, 10.

⁴³Joseph E. Kuhn, “Discipline as a Foundation for Military Training,” *National Service* (February-March 1918): 73-74.

⁴⁴Muller, 47.

on Jackson's Grove and other inoffensive hamlets in southeastern Maryland."⁴⁵ In accordance with *Infantry Training*, several references were made to battalion or regimental commanders witnessing these exercises and evaluating their subordinate formations. In none of these exercises is the use of live ammunition mentioned, most likely due to the demand for ammunition on the ranges as well as a lack of suitable areas to fire outside of the range complex.

Overall, the training of the infantryman on his rifle at Camp Meade appears to have been the top priority and generally conducted in accordance with the prescribed doctrine. This is by no means an indication that all Soldiers left for France as expert riflemen, since nearly all of those in the 79th Division were civilians the year before. Logistical constraints, such as the initial inadequate supply of rifles, were overcome and resulted in little to no effect on the quality of training. The obsolete rifles that were initially issued were adequate for drill, and until the completion of the firing range were not good for much else. When the M17s did arrive, the men of the 79th had completed rifle ranges and had several months to train on them. Marksmanship training, which appears to have been conducted within the regulations of the time, did not result in making expert marksmen of all of the Soldiers in the division, but it did give each man a fair level of practice, skill, and the confidence to engage targets at ranges of several hundred yards. The Soldiers of the 79th left for France as proficient and able riflemen, minus the ability to conduct rifle fire above the individual level. Collective fire would have been beneficial not only for the average Soldier, but for the officers as well, who left for France never having practiced live fire control of their units.

⁴⁵Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, 28.

As for bayonet training, it appears to have been equal to or greater than doctrine prescribed. Unit histories, personal accounts, and pictures confirm that the 79th Division trained on bayonets in the manner outlined in *Notes on Bayonet Training*, and the frequency of the bayonet suggests that the recommended 42 hours of instruction in the sixteen-week training program outlined in *Infantry Training* was met or exceeded. The training conducted not only met the guidelines, but additions, such as the rifle marksmanship at the end of the bayonet assault course, all point to the division following the training guidance from Pershing that the AEF would practice offensive warfare. The lack of a bayonet assault course until spring 1918 may have initially caused heartache for trainers, but with the continual gains and loss of personnel at Camp Meade, the later the training was conducted, the more likely it was that the men trained remained with the division for service in France.⁴⁶

As for the massed maneuver of formations, the facilities to replicate the massive system of trenches, strong points, and shellholes were not available, and therefore the practice in maneuver warfare was practiced on much more manicured ground. The lack of destroyed terrain and no enemy threat forced leaders to employ their formations tactically different than they would over the battlefields of France, but the effect was nearly the same: the leaders gained experience in maneuver, the Soldiers gained experience in unit tactics. The only improvements to this training would have been the additions of live ammunition, replicated terrain, and the presence of a live enemy. For

⁴⁶Transfer of personnel from Camp Meade to other installations is covered later in this chapter.

what they had, the 79th did a relatively good job in preparing their infantrymen to fight in France.

Machine Gun Training

From their arrival in September to December 1917, the machine gunners of the 79th Division conducted training similar to that of the infantrymen. Although they operated as independent companies and battalions, their training at first was the same as the infantry, driven by doctrine and lack of machine guns. The role of the machine gun, still evolving in the U.S. Army, was generally new in doctrine, with no true description outside of general employment situations. The updated *Field Service Regulations* described machine guns as “emergency weapons. . . . Their effective use will be for short periods of time—at most but a few minutes—until silenced by the enemy.”⁴⁷

Like the sixteen week training model for the infantry shown in figure 2, *Infantry Training* prescribed a training regiment for machine gun companies, with variations in “Use of weapons, . . . gun drill in addition to infantry drill; . . . care of animals on the march; field fortification, gun emplacements; . . . cooperation with the infantry; transportation . . . method of carrying guns.”⁴⁸ An account from the 313th Machine Gun

⁴⁷The most current field service regulation at the time training began was *Field Service Regulation, 1913, updated to April 15, 1917*. Even in this, machine guns are only mentioned in their basic organization and very generic descriptions of how they could be employed, such as to defend bridges or to support water crossings. *Infantry Training*, published in August 1917, provided a general description of a training plan. It was not until December that *Machine Gun Drill Regulations (Provisional)* was published in December 1917 that the machine gunners had a work of their own. United States War Department, *Field Service Regulations: United States Army, 1914, Corrected to April 15, 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 79.

⁴⁸*Infantry Training*, 26.

Battalion commander noted that “It was not until New Year’s Day, 1918, with enrollment standing at six officers and 126 men, that the company laid aside the old Krag Spanish-American war rifles and began to organize as a machine gun company.”⁴⁹ With a lack of machine gun availability Army-wide, the machine gunners were initially issued Spanish-American War era Colt machine guns, themselves in limited supply, and wooden cutouts resembling the Vickers machine gun used by the British.⁵⁰ It was not until early 1918, with the publication of *Machine Gun Drill Regulations (Provisional) 1917*, that the machine gunners possessed tailored training doctrine.⁵¹ *Machine Gun Drill Regulations* outlines programs for drill, use of pack animals for transportation, and other skills vital to machine gun units, but falls short in one key area. Lacking were explanations of how to conduct live-fire training as well as anything more than general descriptions for their employment. Not that this mattered at the time, the machine gunners had yet to be introduced to their guns.

To conduct machine gun training without the guns, the gunners conducted training on everything short of firing. Training of the ammunition-bearing animals, on mule carts, and drills with the wooden guns occupied the days of the men. In the evenings, the officers and NCOs studied the newly-released *Machine Gun Drill*

⁴⁹John W. Kress, *One of the Last ‘Rugged Individualists,’* (1972), 17.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*; Edw. J. Brill, *Machine Gun Company, 314th Infantry, AEF*, <http://www.314th.org/machine-gun-company.html> (accessed 23 November 2010).

⁵¹*Machine Gun Drill Regulations (Provisional) 1917* was written in 1917 but not published and into the hands of machine gunners until early 1918. United States Army War College, *Machine-Gun Drill Regulations (Provisional) 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918).

Regulations, and in the days following would put the lessons into practice on the men.⁵² Also, officers, NCOs, and Soldiers attended a machine-gun school at the division level, where British instructors taught the machine gunners of the 79th how to employ their guns in combat.⁵³ Crews drilled in transportation, setup, and teardown of their guns, as well as on elevation adjustments. A unique setup drill conducted in the 316th Machine Gun Company consisted of paintings of French villages being set up, crews running forward with their guns for emplacement and preparation to fire, a target on the painting being given, and crews making gun adjustments to engage the target. This was all done while the machine gun officers observed and timed the men, working to minimize the amount of time crews would need to employ their weapons.⁵⁴ Once again, the men of the 79th made the most of what little they had.

The delay in receiving machine guns for the 79th Division paid off in May 1918 when the outdated and wooden guns were replaced with the 1917 Browning .30 caliber heavy-machine gun; the 79th being the first division fully equipped with this model.⁵⁵ Within days, machine gunners were at the range firing their new weapons. A simulated combined arms exercise was conducted where 35 of the division's machine guns fired over 200,000 rounds on a notional infantry objective, with dummies in front of the

⁵²DuPuy, 29.

⁵³This is one of the multiple schools that the division conducted at their level as prescribed in *Infantry Training*.

⁵⁴“‘Little Corporal’ has ‘Tank’ Service Billet,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 27 February 1918.

⁵⁵“New Browning Guns Coming out Rapidly,” *The New York Times*, 25 May 1918.

machine gunners to simulate advancing infantry. A reporter covering the event for the *New York Times* noted that, “It would have been possible to substitute real Soldiers for the dummies, as the fire of the gunners was so accurate that not one of the dummies was struck by the barrage. . . . All who were present today were more than pleased with the manner in which the Browning guns performed.”⁵⁶ More than likely, the glowing article printed in the *New York Times* was a product of journalism eager to produce positive stories about American forces and not an honest, critical review by a trained observer. Outside of this exercise, the machine gunners fired an additional 250,000 rounds, the only documented machine gun firing at Camp Meade.⁵⁷ If the 450,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition were divided equally between the full authorization of 260 machine guns, each gun would have fired less than 1,750 rounds.⁵⁸ This small amount of ammunition per gun, coupled with the likelihood that not all machine gun crews participated, leads to the conclusion that few crews fired their machine guns prior to their departure for France.

Upon departure from Camp Meade, a majority of the machine gunners were at a level beyond familiarization but well short of proficient. Training in crew drills, along with secondary tasks such as transportation of the weapons, were valuable to the

⁵⁶“Find Browning Guns Effective in Barrage,” *The New York Times*, 30 May 1918.

⁵⁷“\$22,500 Up in Smoke,” *The Sun* (Baltimore, MD), 30 May 1918.

⁵⁸The count of 260 guns per division includes the 36 guns authorized to serve as anti-aircraft guns within the artillery brigade. In a ground role, 224 guns are authorized, the sum of the divisional and two brigade machine gun battalions, as well as the four independent machine gun companies located in each regiment. United States Army Center for Military History, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions* (1948; repr., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1988), 341.

education of the men of the machine gun companies and battalions, and in these the men were well trained. Lacking in their training was an understanding of the mechanics and maintenance of their guns, leaders experienced in fire control, and crew live-fire experience.

Artillery Training

While the training focus of the U.S. Army and the strategy of open warfare focused on the infantry, the war being waged by the British and the French was dominated by artillery. The 79th Division's organic artillery, the 154th Field Artillery Brigade, trained at Camp Meade the same time as the infantry and other arms; however, there is no evidence to suggest that any type of combined arms training with artillery and infantry took place. Overall, their training was limited and did not produce competent artillerymen. This was due to two factors: the lack of qualified personnel and resultant shortages in leadership, and the lack of equipment and ammunition available for training.

Shortages in leadership were abundant throughout the U.S. Army in 1917, but the most severe shortages were found in the ranks of the artillery. After monitoring three years of war in Europe, it was apparent to Army leadership that in order to prevail on the battlefields of the Western Front, the current force structure, heavy on infantry and cavalry but woefully inadequate on artillery, would require a re-alignment. Soldiers from the Regular Army and National Guard, mostly cavalymen, were re-classified by the thousands as artillerymen. Although similar to the hyperinflation of rank found elsewhere in the Army, none were as drastic as in the artillery community. A recent study of the state of manpower in the ranks of the artillery noted that, "When war began there were only 275 field artillery officers who had one year or more of service. This was scarcely

enough to officer one brigade, and by war's end there were 61 brigades. In the early days of the war, when the first 33 brigades were created, only eight of their commanders were field artillerymen."⁵⁹

Seeing that there was little to no experience within the ranks of the artillery, time was needed for not only recruits but also officers and NCOs to learn the craft. The commander of D Battery, Second Battalion, 311th Field Artillery Regiment could boast of seven years of service in the Army; albeit those seven years were as an enlisted cavalryman in the Pennsylvania National Guard.⁶⁰ As difficult as it is to imagine a battery commander with no artillery experience, his battalion commander had almost no military experience at all. MAJ David Reed, a Princeton graduate and lawyer by trade, enlisted in May 1917, attended the First Officers' Training Camp at Camp Niagara, New York, was commissioned directly to major and placed in command; a battalion commander with three months in the Army and no artillery experience.⁶¹ Needless to say, rather than newly-minted officers learning from seasoned seniors and then instructing new recruits, the lack of experience in the artillery forced the newly-made artillery leadership to teach the few skills, if any, they had recently learned themselves.

In actuality, the lack of experience in artillery may have been a mixed blessing for the Army. By 1914, artillery tactics had not developed much since the turn of the century.

⁵⁹Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 209.

⁶⁰William Elmer Bachman, *The Delta of the Triple Elevens* (Hazelton, PA: Standard-Sentinel Print, 1920), 18.

⁶¹*Ibid*, 22; United States Senate website, "Biography of David Aiken Reed," <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000114> (accessed 12 December 2010).

However, in the three years of fighting prior to United States entry, it had changed significantly and had become the dominant force on the Western Front. The United States was slow to catch on to the changes in artillery in Europe, although articles about events and artillery employment in Europe appeared in the *Field Artillery Journal* as early as the July-September 1914 edition.⁶² The manuals used to train the artillerymen were not American at all, such as the War College publication *Manual for the Battery Commander, Field Artillery: 75mm Gun*; which was translated from French. *Manual for the Battery Commander* was the first artillery doctrine published for U.S. Army artillerymen since the previous century.⁶³ The publication of French doctrine was fully appropriate, for the guns that would be used by the light artillerymen of the United States were the French 75mm's.⁶⁴

The second factor limiting training in the United States was shortages on equipment and ammunition. In May of 1917, there were a total of 400 light and 150 heavy field guns in the inventory of the U.S. Army.⁶⁵ In a *New York Times* article describing the 22 December 1917 review of the 79th Division by Secretary of War Baker, the unnamed author notes

The lack of equipment was most apparent, of course, in the artillery, for with that branch the lack is almost total. There are two regiments of heavy field artillery at

⁶²Marlborough Church, ed., *The Field Artillery Journal* 4, no. 3 (1914).

⁶³Army War College, *Manual for the Battery Commander, Field Artillery: 75mm Gun* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 1, 3.

⁶⁴The table of organization for artillery brigades included two light regiments of 75mm guns, two heavy regiments of 155mm guns, and a trench mortar battery.

⁶⁵John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), 26.

Meade. They should be equipped with thirty-two six-inch guns, all told. They have none whatever. There is one regiment of light artillery, which should have three-inch guns, and it has not enough to train one battery at a time.⁶⁶

The few guns in the possession of the 79th Division were the older 3-inch guns, and were used mostly for drills. These 3-inch guns were on the original table of organization for light artillery regiments, but due to a lack of availability and capacity to manufacture, they were replaced by French 75mm guns. Unfortunately, lack of availability of the 75mm's prior to summer 1918 precluded much training on these pieces, and only a few were shipped to the United States. In the case of the 311th Field Artillery Regiment, it received one 75mm gun, just weeks prior to departure for France. With its late arrival, this gun was used only for familiarization. The artillerymen would not meet the artillery pieces they would fire in combat until their arrival in France.

Even if enough artillery pieces had been on hand, the ammunition to fire them did not. To train and hone the skills of artillerymen without the ability to fire their guns, the *Field Artillery Journal* printed artillery problems that could be worked out on paper. In a description of the shortage of ammunition for pre-war training later in his career, World War I artilleryman COL Conrad Lanza remarked "Except for rare experimental fires, fire for effect was not allowed . . . fire at night, or during periods of non-visibility, or against concealed targets, which we found later constituted most of our battle fire, was prohibited. Such fire was considered a waste of ammunition."⁶⁷ Within the 79th Division, live-fire of artillery pieces did occur, but this was the exception rather than the norm,

⁶⁶"Draft Army's First Review," *The New York Times*, 30 December 1917.

⁶⁷Conrad H. Lanza, "The Artillery in Support of the Infantry in the AEF," *Field Artillery Journal* 26, no. 1 (January-February 1936): 62.

their firing occurring in the weeks prior to departure for France, the experience deemed “too light to be important.”⁶⁸ Thus, the 154th Artillery Brigade deployed to France as a relatively untrained unit, capable of performing gun drills, transporting their guns, and exposed to the sound of their weapons.

The artillery brigade that would support the 79th Division in combat, the 57th Field Artillery Brigade of the 32nd division, faced similar circumstances in training, for they too were being equipped and trained after their recent conversion to artillery. The National Guardsmen of the 57th had personnel who had sporadically trained together for years, but they had little experience in artillery. Some of the Soldiers in the 57th had an artillery background, but a majority of them came from other arms, mostly cavalry. All written accounts of training examined spoke in terms of generalities, and often as is the case in self-glorifying unit histories, no negative reviews for the personnel or training were given. To believe that the 57th Field Artillery Brigade had adequate equipment, manpower, experience, and ammunition for training in the United States and therefore were trained to a level that they would have been able to move immediately to the trenches of the Western Front and operate as an effective fighting force is just not possible. Although turnover of manpower was not as drastic as in the National Army, the ranks of the National Guard, who ranked along with the Regular Army as the only source for experienced Soldiers, were routinely thinned to spread experience throughout the rest of the force.

As for the 147th Field Artillery Regiment of the 41st division, which also supported the 79th in the capture of Montfaucon, its level of training is not clear, but

⁶⁸Bachman, 40.

appears to have been inadequate as well. Echoing the transformation found throughout the artillery in 1917, the men of the 147th departed home as the Fourth South Dakota Infantry Regiment only to discover they had been re-designated as the 147th Field Artillery Regiment when they arrived at Camp Greene, North Carolina. When asked by one of his now-battery commanders what had become of the Fourth Infantry Regiment, COL Boyd Wales remarked, “I don’t know what’s become of it. All I know is that we’re all shot to pieces and I’m supposed to be colonel of an artillery regiment.”⁶⁹ The only artillery experience within the regiment were two batteries from the Oregon National Guard, and “around these two batteries what might be called ‘the artillery consciousness’ of the regiment began slowly to crystallize.”⁷⁰

During its brief training period in the United States, which lasted less than three months, the 147th Field Artillery Regiment spent little time training for the task at hand. Upon their arrival to Camp Greene, “preliminary training as light field artillery was immediately begun. This instruction consisted chiefly of calisthenics, standing gun drills and the training of horses for artillery work.”⁷¹ After several weeks, the regiment moved to Camp Mills, New York, where training consisted of classroom instruction and the

⁶⁹Joseph Mills Hanson, *South Dakota in the World War, 1917-1919* (South Dakota State Historical Society, 1940), 86.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 88.

⁷¹The guns used for this training were from the two batteries of the Oregon National Guard. These three-inch guns were later taken away from the Regiment when they departed Camp Greene, leaving an untrained artillery regiment without any guns to train on. William R. Wright, *The History of the Sixty-Sixth Field Artillery Brigade* (Denver, CO: Smith-Brooks Printing Co., 1919), 10.

officers conducting one firing problem each on borrowed three-inch guns.⁷² As seen in the other two artillery units already discussed, the 147th was not armed with its wartime guns, 75mm French cannons, while in the United States. Their training was perhaps the worst of all units associated with the 79th Division, being slightly more beneficial than if they would have shipped directly to France.

After reviewing the information on all three artillery units and considering the need to train personnel, the lack of equipment, and inadequate ammunition, it is safe to conclude that there was little live-fire artillery training while in the United States, and that which did occur had little value beyond familiarization. There is also no evidence the infantrymen of the 79th Division or the artillerymen that would support them having conducted combined arms training, and it is highly likely that this never happened. This is further reinforced by the lack of description in divisional or regimental histories of infantry, brigade and battery histories of artillery, and personal description of training in diaries, of any type of infantry and artillery training during this period. The result was the infantrymen of the 79th Division and the artillerymen who would support them deployed to France incapable of conducting infantry and artillery combined arms operations. Overall, the artillery was not adequately trained Stateside and were most likely not able to conduct any operation more complex than a basic direct-fire mission. Their only hope for success would lie in the training conducted in France.

⁷²Hanson, 96.

Evaluation of the Training Conducted in the United States

Overall, the saying, “In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king,” could sum up the training. The new recruits, pulled fresh from civilian life with no military experience, trained alongside NCOs in individual drill and collective training, a majority of whom who were either their peers or second-class Regular Army Soldiers. The actual trainers, the lieutenants, were generally nothing more than recruits with an additional three months of training and a larger paycheck, understandably prone to errors and lack of depth in their instruction. The primary trainers for companies, the captains, were a mixed bunch, generally the only ones to this point who had any Army experience, some measured only in months. Fortunately, some of the infantry captains had, for the most part, experienced pre-war training (therefore outside of the rush to expand the Army and possibly more thorough) through prior service and Plattsburg Camps. Some also had some experience as trainers themselves, such as previous trainers at Officers’ Training Camp at Camp Niagara.⁷³ As for the battalion commanders, the majors were also a mixed lot. Most had officer experienced measurable years, but as discussed earlier in this chapter, some were accomplished civilians placed directly into battalion command. It seems as though the leadership of the division acknowledged this lack of experience, for multiple accounts describe classes and other instruction occupying the evenings of the NCOs and officers. Although they may not have had the ideal experience or education in military affairs, the foresight and the desire to change were present—the best was made of a poor situation.

⁷³Thorn, 14.

In addition to the rifle and bayonet training, the sixteen week schedule in *Infantry Training* dictates many other areas to cover, such as chemical training and physical fitness. Both officers and NCOs from throughout the division attended the chemical warfare training at the division gas school, after which they would instruct their formations.⁷⁴ Lectures, along with practical exercises, such as use of the gas chamber, taught men the danger and self-protection measures to take against gas. By the end of their training, 79th Division Soldiers were well-versed on the effects of gas and expected to don their masks in less than 5 seconds.⁷⁵ As for physical fitness, a lot of effort was placed into the conditioning of the men. Activities such as marches with full gear, the bayonet assault course, obstacle courses, physical training, and organized sports were discussed throughout multiple accounts, with multiple references in diaries and unit histories as to the increase in the physical ability of the men. Physical fitness was such a priority that the U.S. Government's Commission on Training Camp Activities placed a physical fitness and a boxing director at each camp.⁷⁶

With the focus on individual skills and collective action, combined arms training for the Soldiers of the 79th Division was very limited. No evidence exists of the infantrymen of the 79th Division conducting exercises with artillery, nor is there evidence of the artillery that would support the 79th in their actions on Montfaucon

⁷⁴The schedule in *Infantry Training* is only a portion of the manual. Other areas of the manual discuss the importance of physical training, discipline, and the setup of divisional schools for supply officers and supply sergeants, clerks, and mechanics. These all were present in the 79th, further suggesting a close adherence to published training guidance.

⁷⁵History Committee of the 79th Division Association, 36.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 229.

training with infantry. The only evidence of combined arms training discovered was the infantry with machine guns. In the most complex combined arms event found during research, the regimental-level maneuver of the 316th Infantry was “supported by machine gun companies, the engineers and signal battalions.”⁷⁷ Prior to departure for France, units such as the 314th Machine Gun Company of the 314th Infantry Regiment worked regularly with their supported unit, whom (in spring 1918) they conducted maneuvers with “day after day” in “storming and conquering every hill and dale in the Meade vicinity.”⁷⁸ The relationship between the regimental machine gun company and its supported infantry unit was described in one regiment as,

because of constant association with the other companies of the regiment, (the machine gun company) became more accustomed to operating with the regiment than with the independent (machine gun) companies or battalions. The regimental commander, in need of machine guns, at once thought of his regimental company and called on them before asking assistance from the division.⁷⁹

The statement above sums up what a regiment’s machine gun company was supposed to have: a habitual relationship with the infantry of the regiment, which was built through shared training exercises.

Minus any new arrivals, the machine gunners of the 79th who departed for France were proficient in their drills and well-trained to support the infantry, but sorely lacking elsewhere. As stated earlier, training deficiencies consisted of lack of knowledge of mechanical workings and maintenance of their guns, fire control by leaders, and actual

⁷⁷“County Boys in Mimic Battle,” *The Gettysburg Times* (Gettysburg, PA), 21 May 1918.

⁷⁸Kress, 22.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

firing of the guns. Fortunately, training would continue in France prior to the 79th entering the trenches.

As for the training of trench warfare, it appears it was covered in accordance with the training schedule listed in *Infantry Training*. The schedule outlines a total of 53 hours of trench instruction, ranging from a one hour lecture on trenches to three hours of battalion-level operations at night. Regimental histories cover events similar to those found in the history of the 313th, which states, “Early in the winter, which will long be remembered for its severeness (sp), an elaborate system of trenches was started. The men dug away with a will and the ground soon began to look like the battlefields of Europe.”⁸⁰ Other references, such as found in the 315th indicate that “(up to mid-April 1918) the tendency of most of the training had been toward the methods of trench warfare.”⁸¹

Strangely, little is mentioned outside of the official unit histories of training in the trenches. Contrary to its sister regiments listed above, the history of the 316th states,

an elaborate trench system with all modern conveniences, including open plumbing. This trench system was a marvel to behold... It was a masterpiece, a work of art, and, of course, nobody thought of profaning it by using it. So there it lay in lonesome grandeur in those Meade woods and plains, the apple of the engineer's eye, too sacred for a vulgar doughboy to desecrate, except when it needed fixin'.⁸²

The reasonable conclusion to draw from the materials researched is that the men of the 79th received decent training in the construction of trenches and trench life, but did not extensively practice trench warfare stateside. This was most likely by design, for GEN

⁸⁰Thorn, 12.

⁸¹Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, 31.

⁸²Glock, 12.

Pershing and other American leaders believed the British and the French reliance on trench warfare could not win the war, and that American forces practicing open warfare were required to break the deadlock. Thus, the Soldiers of the 79th learned that fighting was inherently an offensive practice of maneuver, and trench warfare was simply their departure point.

Although the 79th overcame many obstacles and generally prepared Soldiers individually and as part of a unit, one factor that the division could not overcome was the turnover of personnel. The first accounts of losses of personnel due to transfer appear less than one month after the camp opened in October 1917. That month, the 315th Infantry alone transferred out 1,000 men in under 48 hours.⁸³ By early 1918, several units were down to one-third of their allotted strength, and the recommendation was made by the War Department to the Chief of Staff to disband the 79th Division and distribute its manpower throughout the Army to fill shortages in other organizations.⁸⁴ Fortunately for the 79th, this recommendation was not acted upon. Men would come into Camp Meade piecemeal after that, with a heavy addition just prior to departure. Numbers of men trained vary depending on the source, with estimates of 75,000 to 90,000 men trained at Camp Meade to fill a division of 28,000 men... approximately three times the amount trained versus authorized. In early July 1918, just days prior to departure from Camp

⁸³Historical Board of the 315th Infantry, 26-27.

⁸⁴This was found on an unsigned memo from a Major General at the War Department to the Chief of Staff. "War College division Memo 10173-47," www.footnote.com/image/18027635 (website available through the National Archives in Kansas City, accessed 18 December 2010).

Meade, 590 new men arrived to fill the gaps in the 311th Field Artillery Regiment.⁸⁵ The official history of the division estimates that it “left the States with approximately sixty-five per cent of its men in the service only six weeks.”⁸⁶ This, above all other reasons, is why the 79th Division left for France relatively untrained and clearly not able to conduct combat operations.

In conclusion, there was a general lack of experienced leadership and trainers, lack of equipment, and the ever-present turnover of personnel and leadership. This, without question, placed an undertrained division on board of ships to fight in a war where their opponent had been hardened, and conversely also attrited, by three years of war. There were many deficiencies present for the 79th Division, deficiencies that were also present, at one level or another, throughout the entire National Army and AEF as a whole. The 79th was able to overcome a majority of the obstacles and produce some decently-trained Soldiers, not yet ready for action on the Western Front, but trained to a level where they could start more complex and combined arms training. However, this was a case for a minority of the Soldiers, for the two-thirds of the division which deployed with six weeks or less of training was an obstacle that the 79th could not overcome.

⁸⁵Bachman, 41.

⁸⁶History Committee of the 79th Division Association, 15.

CHAPTER 3

TRAINING IN FRANCE

As the men of the 79th Division walked off their transports and placed their feet on French soil in July 1918, their leadership understood that the training they would receive over the next few weeks would place the finishing touches on the skills formed at Camp Meade and prepare them for active combat. Their previous completion of some basic Soldier, trench warfare, and open warfare training prepared the men of the 79th for more advanced tactics and training just miles behind the fighting on the Western Front. Some training they would see in France, such as rifle practice, physical fitness training, and maneuver, was a continuation of the training conducted at Camp Meade. Other types, such as infantry / signal integration, rifle marksmanship for new Soldiers, machine gun training, and artillery training was new. All of the training was necessary, but ultimately incomplete.

Chapter 3 will discuss and analyze the training conducted by the 79th Division after their arrival to France, a time period lasting from late July until early September 1918. Initially, the division was to train near Chatillon-sur-Siene at Training Area Twelve, but due to a lack of facilities and potable water in the area, the location changed to the fields around Champlitte and Prauthoy, an area designated Training Area Ten.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Upon arrival to Training Area Twelve, the 157th Infantry Brigade and a handful of divisional troops discovered that the local water system was unable to accommodate the entire division. The divisional training site changed to Training Area Ten, and after one week at Training Area Twelve, the 157th and divisional troops departed. Due to its minor role in training, it will not receive by-name coverage from this point forward and all experiences will be included in the events at Training Area Ten. Elbridge Colby, "The Taking of Montfaucon," *Infantry Journal* 47, no. 2 (March-April 1940): 132-133; Conner to Commanding General, 79th Division, General Headquarters AEF Memo No. 161, 24

The training of the divisional artillery (154th Artillery Brigade), separated from the division at the conclusion of training at Camp Meade until after the Armistice, will not receive coverage. Instead, the experiences of the U.S. artillery that supported the division during the attack on Montfaucon, namely the 57th Artillery Brigade and the 147th Field Artillery Regiment, will be explored. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the training program in France for AEF forces, followed by an exploration of the training doctrine and the adherence to the doctrine by the 79th Division by infantry, machine gun, and support units. Next, the focus will shift to the experiences of the 57th Artillery Brigade and 147th Field Artillery Regiment. The chapter will conclude with a summary of training and a conclusion. The intent of this chapter is to complete the analysis of the training the 79th Division received prior to their first combat on 26 September 1918.

The AEF Training Program in France

With the massive expansion of the U.S. Army, equipment shortages, and training difficulties present in the United States, GEN Pershing understood that the troops arriving in France were generally undertrained and unprepared to enter the trenches of the Western Front. To correct this shortfall and train the American Soldiers for combat, Pershing tasked Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Paul B. Malone to serve as his newly created G-5 (AEF Training Officer). Pershing so strongly believed in the need for additional training upon arrival in France that he “regarded the activities of his Training Section as

July 1918, “Order to Move from 12th to 10th Area,” ed. American Battle Monuments Commission, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919: Training and Use of American Units with the British and French*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), 721.

of the highest and most immediate importance.”⁸⁸ Malone and his section “prepared and translated training manuals, incorporating changes suggested by actual experience. The Training Section established centers of instruction and staff schools throughout France,” most notably the Staff School at Langres, where the 79th Division would send their battalion, brigade, and division-level staff officers.⁸⁹

Early into his service as the G-5, LTC Malone created a three-month training program of trench and open warfare for AEF divisions after their arrival in France. His initial program consisted of a month of trench warfare training under the instruction of British and French cadre, a month in which the division would pair with a French or British division in the trenches of quiet sectors of the front, and a month of training in open warfare.⁹⁰ This design would give the Soldiers practical experience in trench warfare taught by experienced British and French instructors, the confidence of serving in front-line positions, and the training in offensive tactics necessary to conduct the open warfare that Pershing viewed as the key to U.S. strategy on the Western Front. Unfortunately for the Soldiers in the AEF, external pressures from the British and French, German activity on the Western Front, and political pressures from home would shorten the training program for all but the first few divisions who arrived in France.

In 1918, the British and French entered their fourth year of war with Germany, and the strains of prolonged conflict were beginning to manifest. The disastrous 1917

⁸⁸Harbord, 95.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40.

Neville Offensive resulted in mutinous conditions and relative combat ineffectiveness in many units of the French Army, which produced a critical vulnerability on the Allied side of the Front. After three years, casualties for the British and French averaged 70,000 and 112,000 per month, and the British had begun drafting men up to fifty.⁹¹ The limitations of wartime French industry forced Foch to request the dismantlement of railroads in the United States and the United Kingdom to support the growing rail lines of communication in France and Belgium.⁹² The German Spring 1918 offensive (Michael Offensive), the influx of an estimated 40 German divisions following the close of the Eastern Front with Russia, and the collapse of Italian forces at Caporetto created further pressure and further exacerbated the effect of the French mutiny. These factors combined together led to a shortening of training periods in order to expedite the flow of U.S. forces into combat. Freshly arrived American divisions were entering the trenches, ready or not.

Within the AEF, pressure mounted from the top down to change the program as well. Pershings' initial enthusiasm for U.S. divisions training under British and French divisions eventually disappeared. He now believed that the value of the practical experience under veteran British and French instructors was not worth the loss of aggression the Allied methods had on U.S. Soldiers. By 1918, Pershing concluded that,

Training in quiet sectors in association with French divisions, upon which the French laid so much stress, had proved disappointing during the past months, as their units coming out of the battle line, worn and wary, failed to set an example of the aggressiveness which we were striving to inculcate in our men. Of course

⁹¹Rod Paschall, *The Defeat of Imperial Germany, 1917-1918* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1989), 165; Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 153.

⁹²Paschall, 165.

our own officers were immediately responsible, but they were frequently handicapped by the lack of energy of tired French officers. After considerable experience, it was the inevitable conclusion that, except for the details of trench warfare, training under the French or British was of little value.⁹³

From that point on (with a few exceptions), British and French instruction of U.S. Soldiers was limited to individual tactics under the supervision of U.S. trainers.⁹⁴

It seemed to GEN Pershing that no matter how hard he tried, he could not properly train his AEF for combat and meet the pressures of their entry onto the Western Front. First, as described in the previous chapter, he did not control the training of U.S. forces in the United States, and was limited to writing letters urging the War Department to send him men trained in open warfare. Second, Pershing was growing frustrated with the practice of disassembling units and filling the loss of trained Soldiers with raw recruits prior to shipment to France. In his memoirs, Pershing reflected on the quality of units he was receiving in France and his recommendations:

Although the thirty-four National Guard and National Army divisions that eventually came to France were, with two exceptions, organized in August and September, 1917, they did not receive training as complete units from that time on. They were filled gradually and by piecemeal, weeks and even months usually elapsing before they reached full strength, and, as we have seen, the personnel was constantly changing.

Therefore, when the time came for service abroad, a very large proportion of the men in these divisions had little or no experience, and the training of the unit as a whole had been seriously delayed. Moreover, training methods at home had not improved, as preparation for trench warfare still predominated. All this was

⁹³John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, vol. 2 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931), 114.

⁹⁴Training under British or French instructors from that point forward was normally limited to specialty training, such as grenade, bayonet, gas, and trench life training. Exceptions to limited French and British instruction were the 27th and 30th Divisions of II Corps that served under the British II Corps as well as the black regiments attached to French divisions.

discouraging to their officers, disastrous to morale, threw upon the AEF and extra burden of training, and resulted in our having a number of division only partially trained when the time came to use them.

The indications were that incoming units would soon have to be put in the front lines, with no time to carry out a complete course of training in France for units composed largely of recruits. I therefore sent a vigorous protest against the practice of taking men out of the units in training and emphasizing again the necessity of open warfare exercises for all organizations including the division. The urgency of target practice and musketry training of platoons and companies was especially stressed and it was requested that no men be sent over without four months of intensive training.⁹⁵

All of the problems that Pershing faced, namely the lack of open warfare training in the United States, the disassembly of divisions prior to deployment to France, and the lack of four-months of intensive training for all Soldiers prior to shipment to France were present in the 79th Division. True, the War Department was generating the force of four million men that Pershing had requested, but this force was an Army in numbers, not experience or ability.

Doctrine and the Training of the Infantry

The training program that the 79th Division experienced was a scaled-back version of the three month program, missing was the time allowed in a quiet sector of the Western Front spent learning with an Allied unit. The primary trainers of the 79th Division were officers and NCOs from throughout its ranks, with the augmentation of British and French instructors to teach specialty subjects such as bayonet and machine gun employment. For guidance on how to execute their training, the division relied on previously-used training doctrine, along with updates and the implementation of lessons-learned from recent American experience. The unit history of the 316th Infantry

⁹⁵Pershing, 1:380-81.

describes the use of how a new “little red book called *Offensive Combat of Small Units* came into prominent use” during their time at Training Area Ten.⁹⁶ In *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, four major and several minor recommendations for training infantrymen are given, all of which appear to have been followed by the 79th Division. They were the need to conduct physical exercises, target practice, communications training, and combat exercises by the half-platoon.⁹⁷ The division took the advice of the book and followed eagerly, with nearly all of the recommendations being mentioned specifically within the diaries and unit histories of the 79th Division.

First, the physical conditioning of the men was centerpiece to the training strategy of the 79th Division. Nearly a month in transit with little to no physical activity had greatly reduced their physical condition and left them physically unprepared for the rigors of the front. As one Soldier recalled, “Our destination was the small village of Massoult, about 12 kilometers distance. The weather was very hot and the men were in poor condition due to recent confinement on ship and in box cars, lack of exercise, and proper food. Quite a few were on the point of exhaustion during the hike but they stuck to it, (with a) few falling out.”⁹⁸ To remedy this, the men began a program which included sports, road marches, and bayonet training. Accounts describing the training are fairly similar, with one company history describing their training at Training Area Ten as, “The

⁹⁶Glock, 25.

⁹⁷United States Army War Department, *Instructions on the Offensive Combat of Small Units* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 43-44

⁹⁸Veterans of Company M, 314th Infantry. “The History of Company M,” <http://www.314th.org/Company-M-History/Company-M-History.html> (accessed 1 February 2011), 3.

training was of the severest, almost every day involving a march of ten miles or so and the solution of a complicated maneuver.”⁹⁹ Multiple accounts, such as those found in the diary of a Soldier in the 313th Machine Gun Company, describe six-hour marches occurring weekly.¹⁰⁰ Other accounts from different regiments also discuss six-hour marches, indicative that this was a standardized event throughout the division.

Specifically referenced in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* is the use of bayonet practice as a means of physical conditioning, which did occur with regularity in the 79th Division while at Training Area Ten. References such as in the diary of George Hentschel of the 314th Infantry Regiment that summarize days where Soldiers “built German dummies on drill field” and numerous other references to bayonet training confirm that it regularly occurred throughout the division.¹⁰¹ A Soldier of F Company, 314th Infantry Regiment described bayonet training under a British NCO as, “He would calmly advise the infantrymen to shove a bayonet only a ‘hinch’ into a man’s throat, two ‘hinges’ into his kidneys, or a couple of ‘hinges’ into his ‘art.’ ‘If you git the blade too deep in ‘is ribs, you will ‘ave difficulty in gittin it out, and the next Bouche will git you,’” he repeatedly cautioned.¹⁰² Also, considering the emphasis placed on bayonet training at Camp Meade, as well as documentation, the ease of instruction, experience of bayonet

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Harry Frieman, personal diary kept while serving in the 313th Machine Gun Company, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.23600/pageturner?ID=pm0004001> (accessed 23 November 2010).

¹⁰¹Hentschel.

¹⁰²Joel, 18.

instructors, and lack of facilities needed for training, it is safe to conclude that bayonet training was a centerpiece of training at Training Area Ten.

Not only was weapons training, especially the rifle, specified in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, it also supported Pershings' guidance that the individual marksmanship skills of the infantryman. This leads into the second major recommendation made in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, target practice of organic infantry weapons, specifically

with rifle, automatic rifle, machine gun and mortars. Grenade throwing . . . practice grenades—both hand and rifle—should be freely used. When it can be done without jeopardizing other instruction within the units, the training of non-commissioned officers and selected privates in the use of all infantry weapons should be carried to the highest possible degree of perfection.¹⁰³

Rifle practice for the men who had already received training at Camp Meade appears to be little more than re-familiarization. The lack of infrastructure and established ranges limited Soldiers to firing on improvised ranges they created themselves. One battalion commander described the process of acquiring a range as follows: “in order to secure a good rifle range, I notified a farmer, through the ‘zone major,’ usually a first lieutenant, who had a level piece of ground, that he should keep his people away from it during the day-time, as my Soldiers would shoot across it as targets.”¹⁰⁴

Unfortunate as it was for the “experienced” Soldiers to conduct limited firing in France, the lack of facilities and time for rifle firing had its greatest impact on the 66 percent of the division who deployed with less than six weeks of training. A Soldier of Company M, 314th Infantry Regiment noted, “All men that had not yet been on the range

¹⁰³United States Army War Department, *Instructions on the Offensive Combat of Small Units*, 43.

¹⁰⁴DuPuy, 58.

were given their first instructions and sent on the regimental range to fire on the course.”¹⁰⁵ This entry, made at the beginning of the fifth of six weeks of training at Training Area Ten, suggest that the men who had not trained on their rifles in the United States only received limited training on their rifle in France. The result of the lack of rifle training at Training Area Ten was that two-thirds of the division would enter combat with only a basic familiarization on their rifle. Unfortunately, the open warfare strategy of the AEF centered on the individual infantryman and his rifle, and leadership intended to conduct the war following this basic skill. Just by looking at this statistic alone, the effectiveness of the primary weapon system of the 79th Division was somewhere around 33 percent.

Outside of rifle training, infantrymen were also cross trained “in the discipline and the use of all infantry weapons, (so) that in the excitement of battle, when men cease to be men, they would automatically or sub-consciously perform their duty.”¹⁰⁶ Grenades were introduced to the men, and accounts of the use of live and training grenades demonstrates that training focused not only on familiarizing the men to the noise and destructive force of the weapon, but also to train accurate throwing of the grenade as well. Also, rifle grenades, a relatively new introduction likely not seen at Camp Meade, were in ample supply for use during training.¹⁰⁷ This was somewhat of a rare occurrence, for a majority of unit histories outside of those of the 79th Division have accounts of an

¹⁰⁵Veterans of Company M, 4.

¹⁰⁶Joel, 18.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 19.

infantryman's first experience with a rifle grenade occurring in the trenches just prior to an attack.

Perhaps the most valuable weapons training the men of the 79th Division received was on the new Browning automatic rifle. The Browning automatic rifle, also known as the BAR, gave the infantryman fully-automatic fire without the excessive weight of a machine gun. For the AEF, mass issue of the BAR did not occur until late summer/early fall 1918. The reason for the delay may have been a lag in the United States industrial capacity to produce mass amounts of the BAR, logistical transportation problems to ship the BAR from the United States to France, Pershing's desire to wait until enough BARs arrived to create the greatest effect in combat, or a combination of all three.¹⁰⁸ Whatever the case, BARs were issued to the 79th Division in time to allow familiarization, firing, and tactical maneuver while at Training Area Ten. Self-instruction on the weapons by machine gunners throughout the division was common, as one Soldier noted, "We learned to operate the new Browning automatic rifles, which Stiegler, Rienheard, Wise and Lau showed us how to take apart and assemble."¹⁰⁹ In most cases, machine gunners from the machine gun companies and battalions taught the infantrymen of the 79th how to employ their BARs in combat. Once again, the division made the best out of the few resources it had.

Third, communications were trained on by the signalmen as well as by leaders within the division. Little is written of their training and experiences while at Training

¹⁰⁸Pershing, 2:131; Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 39.

¹⁰⁹History Committee of Company F, 316th Infantry, *History of Company F, 316th Infantry* (Philadelphia: Company F Association of the 316th Infantry, 1930), 44.

Area Ten, but what was written suggests that the training of the signalmen of the 79th at Training Area Ten consisted mostly of infantry training followed by direct signal support of infantry units. Outside of the laying and maintenance of wire for field telephones, no mention is made of signal training in France.¹¹⁰ For the first three weeks, the men marched daily to a local town and conducted drill as well as several maneuvers.¹¹¹ It is likely that these maneuvers consisted mostly of infantry tactics, for the technique of the time called for the allocation of the signal battalions' companies between the four infantry regiments, and therefore the signalmen would have to know how to live, fight, and conduct signal support with the infantry.

Signal training of the leaders of the division usually consisted of a subject matter expert instructing the company-grade officers throughout the division. One such instructor, Sergeant (SGT) LeRoy Haile of the 304th Engineer regiment, incorporated signal training into his land navigation and map reading classes for officers in the 157th Infantry Brigade. In his diary, he mentions teaching and rehearsing semaphore signals, Morse code, and other unspecified signal training with his officers.¹¹² His description of the above training, along with map reading, map making, and land navigation training

¹¹⁰The only source found on the 304th Signal Battalion, *The History of Company C, 304th Field Signal Battalion*, contains a collective history of the Company as well as multiple individual accounts from the inception of the company at Camp Meade until after the armistice.

¹¹¹History Committed of Company C, 304th Signal Battalion, *The History of Company C, 304th Field Signal Battalion* (Philadelphia: The Shade Printing Company, 1920), 27.

¹¹²LeRoy Y. Haile, *A Civilian Goes to War*, unpublished personal diary kept while serving in 304th Engineer Regt, Army Military History Institute World War I Veteran's Surveys (received via email from Military History Institute 20 January 2011), entries for 26-28 August 1918.

that he trained in his classes would have given the company-grade officers of the 79th Division the signal and navigation skills they required for combat.¹¹³ Once again, this training was in line with the doctrine of the time.

Battlefield communications in 1918 had advanced considerably from previous wars, most notably through the use of the field telephone, carrier pigeons, and wireless radio. Within the 304th Signal Battalion, the primary method of communication used was the field telephone.¹¹⁴ By far the best means for precise, instant communications, the field telephone relied on the use of wire between phones.¹¹⁵ The task of laying and maintaining wire fell upon the men of the 304th, and a majority of their training consisted of emplacing and maintaining wire in support of advancing infantry. The carrier pigeon, long relied upon by the Belgians and adapted for use by the British and French, was also adapted by the United States and used by the 79th Division.¹¹⁶ The only mention of carrier pigeon training was in the United States, but with their use during the capture of Montfaucon, maintenance and training of the pigeons in France must have taken place.¹¹⁷ The final means of advanced communication was radio. The wireless telegraph was

¹¹³This was not the first time that the officers would have experienced most of this training. They had already trained on these skills at Camp Meade and had likely trained upon these same skills at their Officer Training Camp or source of commission.

¹¹⁴History Committed of Company C, 304th Signal Battalion, 27.

¹¹⁵Although the field telephone offered many benefits, the wire laid between the telephone was vulnerable to severance. In the 79th's drive to capture Montfaucon, poor communications plagued the division, mostly due to severances in telephone wire from sources such as artillery and troop movements.

¹¹⁶History Committed of Company C, 304th Signal Battalion, 137.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 12.

available well before the United States entry into the Great War, appearing as early as in the 1910 version of *Field Service Regulations*. It was a cumbersome and often unreliable means of communication, and not used by the infantry in their capture of Montfaucon.¹¹⁸ Overall, in conducting drill and maneuvers as well as training for nearly three weeks directly under the infantry they would support, the signalmen of the 304th Field Signal Battalion were relatively well-trained and did quite well with the resources and time constraints they faced.

The fourth and final major recommendation made in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* was combat training in the half-platoon. The purpose of training by the half-platoon was not only for tactical purposes (at that time, half-platoons were used regularly for missions such as raids,) but also to allow instructors better observations of individual Soldiers. This recommendation is the only one of the four not specifically mentioned within the unit histories and personal accounts. However, considering the adherence to the other three recommendations, as well as documentation of the use of half platoons

¹¹⁸The portable radio devices of the time were large, bulky items with limited reliability. The system available in the Army at the time weighed 440 pounds, required a kite to fly its antenna, and a crew of at least three to operate. There is no doubt that the severe conditions encountered on the battlefield would have limited its use to stationary facilities in secure areas, and there is no mention of wireless in the 1917 version of the *Infantry Drill Regulations*. A review of doctrine, unit histories, and systems available at the time suggests that wireless was trained upon by some artillerymen and may have been used by artillery and higher-headquarters units. Archie Frederick Collins, *Manual of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony*, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1913), 194, 203-206; United States War Department, *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Field Artillery of the Army of the United States, 1917*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 211; United States War Department, *Infantry Drill Regulations, corrected to April 15, 1917*; Carl Penner, Frederic Sammond, and H. M. Appel, *The 120th Field Artillery Diary, 1880-1919* (Milwaukee: Hammersmith-Kortmeyer Co., 1928), 104.

during combat operations, it is evident that the 79th adhered to this recommendation as well.¹¹⁹

Machine Gun Training

For the machine gunners of the 79th Division, their training in France was nearly identical to that of the infantry. Daily routines included the conduct of drill, physical fitness training, occasional range work with machine guns, maneuver training, and individual training on survivability tasks (such as gas training). As recounted in the diary of a Soldier of the 313th Machine Gun Company, drill occurred as often as in the infantry, six days a week, from their arrival in late July to their departure at the end of the first week of September. The only exceptions to days filled with drill were two days of six-hour hikes, one day of transportation, two days of maneuvers (one specified Regimental-level), a half-hour gas test, two medical inspections, and one day at the machine gun range.¹²⁰

All of the training conducted would have produced competent machine gunners ready to enter the trenches of the Western Front were it not for three major exceptions. The first exception was their lack of training on advanced machine gun techniques. An examination of the notes machine gunners took during training reveals that the use of machine guns for indirect fire and night fire were topics of discussion but never trained.¹²¹ Second, a majority of the machine gunners in the division were familiarized

¹¹⁹History Committee of the 79th Division Association, 67.

¹²⁰Frieman, entries made from 1 August to 9 September 1918.

¹²¹William Schellberg, *Your Brother Will: The Great War Letters and Diary of William Schellberg*, ed. Jerry Harlowe (Baltimore: Patapsco Falls Press, 1992), 167.

but not nearly proficient with their weapons. In the 313th Machine Gun Company listed above, the men, many of whom had never fired their weapons before, spent one day at the firing range prior to their departure for the trenches. In the 311th Machine Gun Battalion, live-fire machine gun training was a priority for the gun crews, with their commander noting “at the end of five weeks (of training) every man had shot at least five thousand rounds.”¹²² These two examples demonstrate the extreme descriptions of training found in the diaries and unit histories examined, and neither could have produced proficient machine gunners. The third factor that prevented the machine gunners of the 79th from forming competent, able units falls again to the lack of experienced leadership.

With just over one month to train in France, one major deficiency for the machine gunners of the 79th they could not overcome was the lack of experienced leadership. This was not due to lack of want or effort, for after the junior enlisted Soldiers of the 79th had completed their daily training and were perusing around the countryside and cafés of France, the leaders were conducting evening training sessions and continuing to familiarize themselves with doctrine. The problem was that no amount of training conducted in the time allotted (both in the United States and France) could make up for the lack of experienced leadership. As was the case at Camp Meade, the lack of actual experience was one problem that no one in the division could overcome. The result was that the machine gun units of the 79th departed the Tenth Training Area in need of more live-fire training, advanced machine gun employment technique training, fire control training, and experienced leadership. They were not ready to enter combat.

¹²²DuPuy, 58.

The remainder of the division, the engineers, mechanics, drivers, medics, cooks, and office clerks, conducted training on their rifles, gasmasks, and regaining their physical physique just like the infantrymen, but also trained in their specialties as well. The divisional engineers of the 304th Engineer regiment initially began their training in France with time spent at the rifle range, conducting training outlined in the *Infantry Drill Regulation*, physical training through exercises with full packs, and concluded with tasks such as “signaling and trench construction,” both during the day and at night.¹²³ The engineers not only trained on defensive warfare tasks such as trench construction, but also on offensive warfare tasks, such as wire breaching. They practiced breaching of barbed wire using both wire cutters and explosives during the day and at night.¹²⁴ Outside of training, the men also labored to construct and improve roads and bridges. The construction and repair of roads and bridges may not have seemed as important as breaching wire obstacles, but the timely movement of logistical and fire support assets on well-maintained lines of communication were vital to successfully combat the Germans. The realization of the value of well-maintained lines of communication would manifest itself weeks later during the battle for Montfaucon, where the lack of roads and the resultant breakdown in supply and support for the infantry of the division, especially the lack of artillery support, would prove costly for the men of the 79th.

¹²³304th Engineer Regiment, *The Official History of the 304th Engineer Regiment* (Lancaster, PA: Steinman and Foltz, 1920), 59.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 58.

Artillery Training

Upon arrival to France, the artillery of the 79th Division, the 154th Artillery Brigade, left the division for training at Le Harve and Cherbourg. The brigade did not return to the 79th until after the Armistice. This was a normal practice and experienced by nearly every division that arrived in France in 1918. The result was multiple artillery units assigned to provide fire support to the 79th Division in their fighting over the course of the next few months. During their attack on Montfaucon, the 57th Artillery Brigade and the 147th Field Artillery Regiment supported the 79th. Unfortunately for the men of the 79th Division, they would not meet the artillerymen that would support them at Montfaucon until days before their fight began, and they would be forced to conduct combined arms operations without any type of habitual relationship.

Although the training of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment in the United States was crude at best, they were one of the best-trained artillery regiments when they completed training in France. Arriving in January 1918 as part of the 41st Division, it was quickly taken from its parent brigade, divided again, and sent to three different areas for training. For men who had not yet seen nor fired the French 75mm cannons they would use in combat, the next nine months would turn them from trainees to the most experienced troops fighting with the 79th Division in the opening days of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

The First Battalion, 147th Field Artillery Regiment arrived at Samur, the home of the French Cavalry School, on 29 January 1918. It was here the First Battalion received the best training of any unit in the regiment from a “large, highly trained, and uniformly

painstaking and courteous corps of French artillery instruction officers.”¹²⁵ Time dedicated to training was similar to that of the infantry, with six full days per week of instruction. A typical day began after breakfast with

setting up exercises, then generally an open air problem, or standing gun drill and a class in the theory of firing. After dinner came the classes in equitation, in field telephone or wireless work or dispersion, an often a map problem. Frequently the work was varied by the introduction of a field problem, actual firing on the range, cavalry hikes and oral or written examination. Following supper came an evening of study for those who found it necessary to work for their knowledge.¹²⁶

The Second Battalion conducted their training at the home of I Corps Schools in Gondrecourt, where the First Division had trained months earlier. Being in proximity to I Corps schools, the men of the Second Battalion had the fortune of not only quality instruction in artillery, but also the ability to conduct combined arms operations. On 1 February 1918, the Second Battalion conducted a live-fire exercise with graduates of the I Corps Infantry Officers’ School. During this exercise, machine guns and the 75mm guns of the Second Battalion fired “directly over the heads of the observation party” and laid a rolling barrage which “raised in jumps of 200 meters” in front of the infantry.¹²⁷ Upon completion of their initial training in France, the batteries of the Second Battalion assumed the duties of artillery trainers for the U.S. I Corps and eventually the II Corps as well.

Compared to its sister battalions, the Third Battalion, 147th Field Artillery Regiment received the lowest quality of instruction. Due to equipment shortages and lack

¹²⁵Hanson, 130.

¹²⁶Ibid., 131.

¹²⁷Ibid., 135.

of instructors, the Battalion was not prepared to conduct training until a month after their arrival in France. Finally, the instructor shortage of the Third Battalion was rectified by the assignment of five graduates of the artillery school at Samur. These five lieutenants, who had trained alongside the Second Battalion, filled the roles of subject matter experts on the French 75mm guns as well as their contemporary employment methods. After the arrival of these officers as well as much-needed equipment, training began in earnest. One month into their training, the men of the Third Battalion partnered with the Sixth Field Artillery Replacement regiment to serve as trainers for new arrivals in France. Still less trained than their peers in First and Second Battalion, they continued to hone their skills while instructing at the same time. By the time they completed their role as trainers in June 1918, the Third Battalion and Sixth Field Artillery trained over 22,000 artillerymen in four months at La Courtine.¹²⁸

With the completion of their initial training in France and tours as instructors, the battalions rejoined into the 147th Field Artillery Regiment in early July 1918 to occupy a sector of the front to complete their training. For the next two weeks, the men of the 147 Field Artillery Regiment received mentorship from the experienced artillerymen of the 102nd Field Artillery Regiment, 26th Division, as well as from French officers in the Toul sector.¹²⁹ Upon completion of this training, the 147th moved yet again, and during

¹²⁸Ibid., 125.

¹²⁹Ibid., 144-45.

this move fell under the 57th Field Artillery Brigade, who would serve as their parent brigade through their time with the 79th at Montfaucon.¹³⁰

Now that the 147th was part of the 57th Artillery Brigade, the entire unit conducted their first operations together in Alsace. It was here that the brigade assumed positions on the line, under the tutelage of French artillery, in support of the 32nd Division. With this, the training program of the 57th Brigade became the only unit in (or supporting) the 79th Division that completed the original AEF training plan outlined by LTC Malone. This training occurred in a quiet sector of the front and gave the men of the 57th not only an opportunity to learn their craft from an experienced unit under battlefield conditions, but also for them to rehearse the skills of their craft under the watchful eye of veteran artillerymen.

Upon completion of their final phase of training, their French instructors departed and the 57th Brigade assumed duties on the Western Front in support of the U.S. 32nd Division. The French and Germans considered this section of the Alsatian front a quiet sector, but the arrival of the gunners of the 57th Artillery Brigade and their orders to increase fires within their area of operations soon changed that. The disappearance of a “live and let live” attitude by the American artillerymen ensured that “shells were falling on both sides of the line, where no shells had fallen for months, and the front line trenches were no longer a place to spend a quiet evening.”¹³¹ Not only would the brigade

¹³⁰From this point forward, all references made to the 57th Brigade include its organic regiments as well as the 147th Field Artillery Regiment. Up until the point that the 147th Regiment joined the 57th Brigade, the artillerymen of the 57th had trained in France for the past two and a half months.

¹³¹Joint War History Commissions of Michigan and Wisconsin, *The 32nd Division in the World War, 1917-1919* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Print Co., 1920), 44.

fight in Alsace, but train as well. Soldiers were sent to and from schools in France, and when not actively engaged in fighting, drills, such as gas defense, occurred with regularity.¹³² Even while actively engaged with the enemy, the 57th continued to hone their warfighting skills.

The four regiments (119th, 120th, 121st, and 147th) of the 57th Brigade would gain valuable experience in Alsace and in other locations over the next few months, firing in support of infantrymen on the Western Front near Rougemont, in the Aise-Marne Offensive, near Fismes on the Vesle River, in the Oise-Aise Offensive, and in the Avescourt sector. During these crucial summer months and early spring of 1918, the men of the 57th Brigade would receive further instruction from French artillerymen, train the 107th Field Artillery Regiment of the U.S. 28th Division, support American, French, and Moroccan forces, survive multiple gas attacks, and pioneer new artillery tactics.

During their second tour of combat in the Aise-Marne offensive, Batteries D and E, 147th Field Artillery, advanced with their 75mm guns immediately behind first-echelon infantrymen and conducted open-sight, direct fire on German targets. This is the first documented account of U.S. Army artillery moving forward with the first wave of advancing infantry to further their advance; Allied artillery had at last begun open warfare on the fields of the Western Front.¹³³ Elements of the 57th Brigade would repeat this tactic again less than one month later when firing in support of the 32nd Division at Juvigny. These tactics indicate that the 57th Artillery Brigade followed Pershing's guidance on training artillery in open warfare, where "the 'most important' artillery skills

¹³²Ibid., 52.

¹³³Hanson, 173.

for open warfare were ‘mounted instruction over difficult ground and at increased gaits, care of horses, . . . rapid preparation and conduct of fire . . . rapid reconnaissance and occupation of positions under tactical situations, and changes of position by echelon.’”¹³⁴ Not only were the men of the 57th capable of conducting traditional fire support tasks and combined-arms operations in support of the infantry, but they were also able to conduct advanced tactics requiring fire, maneuver, and decentralized execution (due to a lack of communications). Although calling them the most capable artillerymen in the summer of 1918 in the AEF is a grand accusation and debatable, there is no question that there could not have been many or any artillery brigades in the U.S. Army more capable than the 57th.

Overall, the quality of training of the artillery was excellent, and by the time the artillerymen of the 57th Brigade departed to meet the 79th Division in September, they had become one of the most experienced artillery brigades in the U.S. Army. Most had trained under expert French instruction, had taught the same skills for several months, and had received actual combat experience. They were capable not only of combined-arms operations with infantry, but also of performing advanced artillery tactics such as rolling barrages in support of advancing infantry, signal operations to adjust fire in support of changing infantry objectives, and conducting maneuver and fire of their artillery pieces in open warfare. Additionally, the relatively small number of casualties from artillery, air, and gas attacks shows that they were ready for war when they arrived in the trenches. Of all of the units that would serve in the 79th Division’s sector during

¹³⁴Mark E. Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Trial: American Artillery Employment in World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 17.

their advance on Montfaucon, the artillerymen of the 57th Artillery Brigade were by far the best trained and most experienced.

Evaluation of the Training Conducted in France

Overall, the training of the 79th Division in France was good, but they were not prepared for what they would face at Montfaucon. The infantry, who had trained on basic Soldier skills, rifle, bayonet, trench warfare, and some open warfare at Camp Meade now had a chance to conduct large-scale maneuvers up to the division level. The support elements of the division received very good training and left Training Area Ten as ready as they could be. For combined arms operations, the infantry trained with the engineers, signalmen, and machine gunners of the division, resulting in all of these specialties being able to operate together with a good understanding of the capabilities and limitations of each other. However, the infantrymen of the 79th did not practice combined arms operations with the dominant force of the Western Front: the artillery.

One of the greatest shortfalls in the training of the 79th Division was the lack of combined arms training between infantry and artillery. The guiding doctrine for the training of the 79th Division, *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, stated “regimental exercise (approach march, attack, assault, passage of lines, re-establishing contact) are as a rule practiced with the artillery.”¹³⁵ Unfortunately for the 79th, this practice did not occur. At Camp Meade, a combination of ammunition, equipment, and training prevented training of the infantry. After their arrival in France, a prioritization of other training and the lack of availability of artillery at Training Area Ten precluded any infantry-artillery

¹³⁵United States Army War Department, *Instructions on the Offensive Combat of Small Units*, 46.

combined arms training there. Finally, the rush to begin the Meuse-Argonne Offensive moved the 79th Division into position in early September and sealed their fate: the infantry would not train with artillery prior to combat.

The artillerymen that would support them, the men of the 57th Artillery Brigade, were among the best and most experienced in the U.S. Army. By the end of the war, this brigade would fire over 500,000 artillery rounds at the Germans, more than any other artillery brigade in the U.S. Army.¹³⁶ Although the artillerymen of the 57th Brigade were among the best, there was no habitual relationship between the 79th Division and the 57th Artillery Brigade, the staff of the 79th Division had never planned missions alongside artillerymen, the infantry officers had never requested fires, and the men had never observed nor controlled artillery in action. In the end, the training and experience of the artillery could not make up for the lack of experience, training, and understanding of artillery employment by the infantrymen of the 79th Division. It was this lack of experience on the part of the infantry that rendered the division incapable of conducting effective combined arms operations with artillery.

As detrimental as the lack of combined arms training between infantry and artillery was to the division, the most detrimental factor to the men of the 79th was one that had haunted them since their inception a year earlier at Camp Meade: a lack of experienced leadership and undertrained Soldiers. The two-thirds of the division that deployed with less than six weeks of training were clearly not prepared for a training program GEN Pershing intended for men with at least four months training.

Unfortunately, due to political pressure and military necessity, the 79th, along with

¹³⁶Penner, 10.

several other divisions, would rush through training to get to the Western Front in time to begin the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.¹³⁷ Although some experience had been gained since the beginning of training nearly a year before at Camp Meade, most of the company-grade officers and NCOs of the division still had less than 18 months of military experience.

The experience problems haunting the 79th were not unique to their division; rather, they were present throughout the entire U.S. Army. The growth of the Army from a force of 200,000 to 4,000,000 and the creation of the National Army had watered down the experience level of Soldiers in the National Army, National Guard, and Regular Army divisions. In order to expand the Army, divisions were routinely stripped of manpower and experience. This cannibalization of divisions resulted in divisions full of trainees, such as the 79th. The solution to the problem came from General Peyton March. March, who had previously served as the commanding general of First Army artillery in France, assumed the position of Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army in March 1918. March's establishment of divisions specifically designated as replacement divisions to provide manpower eventually solved the problem of cannibalization of entire divisions. Unfortunately, this solution was not an immediate fix and did not bear results until the Armistice.¹³⁸

¹³⁷By the spring and summer of 1918, most of the divisions that were arriving in France were in a similar state as the 79th. The growth of the Army from a force of 200,000 to 4,000,000 and the creation of the National Army had not only taken its toll on the 79th, but every other National Army, National Guard, and Regular Army division as well.

¹³⁸Weigley, 375.

For the 79th Division, its 66 percent turnover just prior to deployment to France stands as an extreme example of the lack of experience in the U.S. Army in 1918. No matter how much effort the men of the 79th Division exerted, no matter how hard they worked, they were still destined to enter combat undertrained and execute an attack on the most difficult piece of terrain encountered by any U.S. division thus far in the war. Because of this, First Army advances during the opening of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive would slow, GEN Pershing and other leaders would grow frustrated, and Soldiers of the 79th Division would die.

CHAPTER 4

THE BATTLE FOR MONTFAUCON

Within hours of their departure from Training Area Ten, the men of the 79th Division boarded trains for movement towards the trenches of the Western Front. During their movement, the men experienced their first sights of destroyed villages and the pockmarked earth molded by four years of fighting.¹³⁹ It was now apparent to every man of the 79th Division that their training was complete, or at least they had all of the training they were going to get. For better or for worse, the 79th was moving towards the sound of the guns and their debut in combat. In less than one month, the 79th would conduct their assault on the German strongpoint of Montfaucon, where they would fight across difficult terrain against a determined and well-emplaced enemy, conduct their first combined-arms operations, experience difficulties in communications, and fight a poor plan.

After several days of transit and sleep at transitory camps, the first Soldiers of the 79th Division entered the trenches on the evening of 13 September 1918. For the next 36 hours, the men of the 79th continued to quietly assume control of approximately four and one-half kilometers of front from the French 157th Division.¹⁴⁰ This land, located 15 kilometers northwest of Verdun, included the trenches from which they would attack the Germans on 26 September 1918, as well as the trenches that were marked for use by the 37th Division. Over the next two weeks, the division experienced its first raid, fatalities,

¹³⁹Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 56.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 57. The unit they relieved, the 157th French Division, consisted not only of French Soldiers, but also of black U.S. Soldiers of the 371st Infantry Regiment.

enemy artillery, and gas attacks.¹⁴¹ With the arrival of the 37th Division on 22 September 1918, the 79th consolidated their positions into the trenches they would attack from on the morning of 26 September 1918.

To facilitate the attack, MG Kuhn divided the area assigned to the division into two sectors. On the right, the 314th Infantry Regiment faced an advance across rolling hills on mostly open terrain, with the objectives of Malancourt, the Bois de Tuilerie, and Nantillois (two kilometers north-northeast of Montfaucon) planned for them their first day of the attack. On the left, the 313th Infantry Regiment was to move through the Bois de Malancourt, followed by the Golfe de Malancourt, the Bois de Cuisy, and Montfaucon, with their final objective being the Bois de Beuge.

Opposing the 79th Division was the 450th Regiment and the First Battalion of the 11th Grenadier Regiment, both from the German 117th Division.¹⁴² AEF Intelligence rated the German 117th Division as second-class. Its current manning was approximately 50 percent, and consisted of “many older men, returned wounded, and convalescents, and a large number of Poles and Alsatians.”¹⁴³ In the diary of a Soldier in the 79th, he described captured German Soldiers as,

Most of them are young fellows, all the way from 15 to 20 and some old men about 45. . . . They have good outer garments but their underwear is made out of paper and very poor. They seem to be well fed as all the dugouts that I went into

¹⁴¹Ibid., 64-65.

¹⁴²Elbridge Colby, “The Taking of Montfaucon,” *Infantry Journal* 47, no. 2 (March-April 1940): 136.

¹⁴³The rating system of the AEF consisted of ratings from one to four. AEF General Staff Intelligence Section, “Rating of 117th Division,” *Histories of Two Hundred and Fifty-One Divisions of the German Army which participated in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 611.

were well supplied with eats and everything else and all the prisoners had some food with them.¹⁴⁴

The Germans, who had fought for four years at this point, were reaching the last portion of their manpower reserves and now pressed the young and the old into service. Some of their equipment was not nearly as nice as that used by the fresh, new Americans, but the 79th would soon learn that the Germans did not plan on giving their positions to the young, well-equipped American force.

While the Soldiers may have been rated as second-class and some eager to surrender, the positions they occupied were the most formidable that any AEF division was to face during the first few days of the Meuse-Argonne campaign.¹⁴⁵ Dominating the local countryside, the height of Montfaucon was so significant that the Hohenzollern Crown Prince constructed a bunker with eight-foot thick concrete walls to observe the fighting in and around Verdun two years earlier.¹⁴⁶ The Germans, who held Montfaucon since early in the war, had spent the last four years improving their positions, building strong trenches, dugouts, pillboxes, and observation posts. In fact, the German nicknamed the site “Little Gibraltar.”¹⁴⁷ The French, who fought the Germans for four years on this

¹⁴⁴Harry Cooney to Bob, October 19, 1918, France, in *Pennsylvania Voices of the Great War* ed. J. Stuart Richards (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2002), 172.

¹⁴⁵Harbord, 434-435.

¹⁴⁶Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF, 1917-1918* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 225, 236.

¹⁴⁷Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 59.

ground, did not believe that the inexperienced Soldiers of the AEF could defeat the German defenses and capture Montfaucon before the end of the year.¹⁴⁸

The plan of attack developed by the 79th Division placed brigades in column, the 157th Infantry Brigade in the lead, with the 313th Infantry Regiment on the left and the 314th on the right. The divisional reserve, the 158th Infantry Brigade, followed one kilometer behind the 157th. The 158th placed the 315th Infantry Regiment on the left and the 316th on the right. Although brigades in column may seem like an inefficient and rudimentary formation for attacking infantry, it was perhaps the best of the few available methods and was, for the time, a tactically acceptable and common technique used by the AEF.¹⁴⁹ Constrained by a divisional boundary which forced the 79th through a corridor only two and a half kilometers wide, brigades in column exceeded the doctrinal standard of 300 men for every 100 yards of front.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, this formation allowed for rapid employment of the reserve as well as a force to destroy any bypassed positions. Not only was the technique of brigades in columns used by the 79th Division, but by other U.S. divisions as well. The 37th Division to their left and the Fourth Division to their right

¹⁴⁸Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 182; Stallings, 230.

¹⁴⁹Oliver L. Spaulding, "The Tactics of the War with Germany," *Infantry Journal* 27, no. 3 (September 1920): 231-32.

¹⁵⁰The MTOE strength of an infantry brigade was 8,469. By placing one brigade on a front of 2.5 kilometers, the 79th fielded approximately 309 men per 100 yards of front. United States Army Center of Military History, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces*, 1:343; Colby, 133.

also used this technique for their attack on 26 September 1918; with the experienced Fourth Division using it to advance further than any other First Army division that day.¹⁵¹

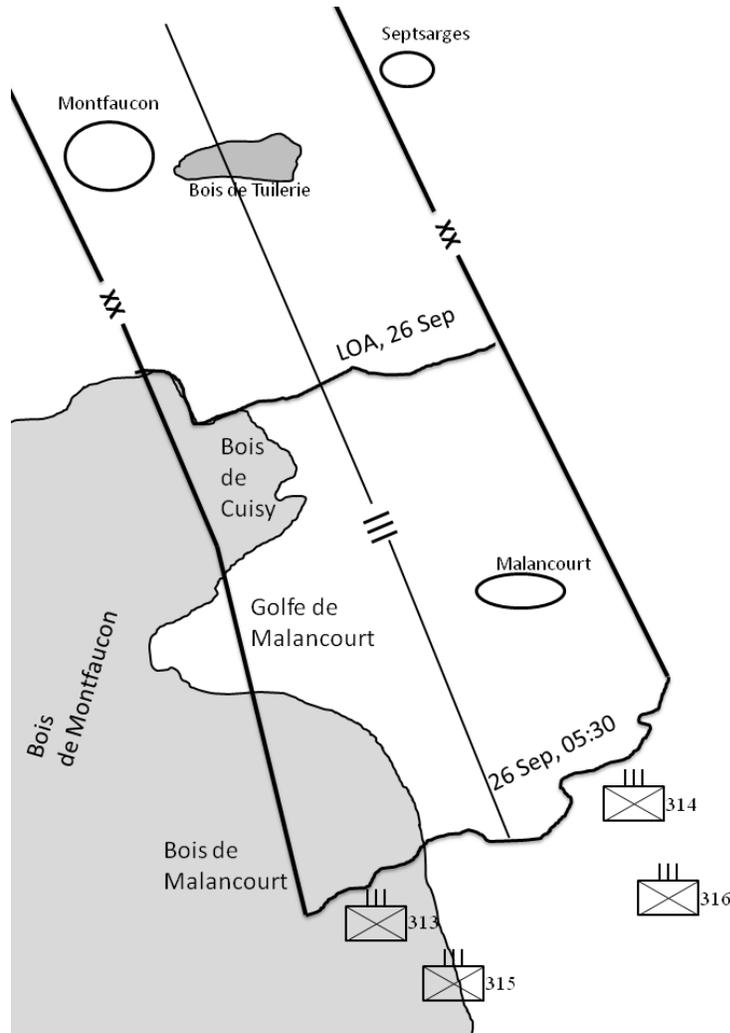


Figure 3. Map Depicting The 79th Divisions' Area Of Responsibility From Their Line Of Departure On 26 September 1918 To Montfaucon

Source: Created by author using maps found in American Battle Monuments Commission, *79th Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944).

¹⁵¹American Battle Monuments Commission, *Fourth Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 51-52; Claire Kenamore, *From Vauquois Hill to Exermont: A History of the Thirty-Fifth Division of the United States Army* (St. Louis: Guard Publishing Co., 1919), 85.

The terrain that stood between the division and Montfaucon was originally open terrain spread across rolling hills, but years of artillery fire churned the landscape to a collection of shellholes and destroyed roads where maneuver was slow at best. This terrain, exposed to heavy fighting from 1915-1917, had

been repeatedly subjected to heavy shellfire, which in the end left the terrain in the worst conceivable condition. The whole ground was pitted with shell craters; the half destroyed timber had sprouted up in a thick second growth; and, across this tangled and broken ground, ran elements of old trenches, wire entanglements and obstacles of every sort in almost inextricable confusion.¹⁵²

To add to this, the weather prior to the attack furthered the plight of the infantrymen. The ten days preceding the attack consisted of rain, cool weather, and little sunshine.¹⁵³ The result of circumstances dictated 79th would advance up and down hills across uneven terrain covered in slick mud, hardly ideal conditions for an attack.

Those who planned the mission anticipated the difficulty of the 79th and adjacent divisions traversing through such terrain, but in the case of the 79th, their estimated rates of movement were still overly optimistic. Rates of advance dictated the pace of the artillery barrage preceding the infantry, initially moving forward at 100 yards every four minutes. Once the infantrymen reached enemy positions and increasingly difficult terrain, the barrage slowed to 100 yards every five minutes. The infantrymen of the 79th discovered this was still too fast.

¹⁵²“History of the Fifth American Army Corps,” in *(Reports from the) Meuse-Argonne, September 26-November (11, 1918?)*, third floor archives, CARL Library, 3-5.

¹⁵³Accounts indicate three to four days of rain. Miller, diary entries from 17-16 September 1918; Veterans of Company M, 5; Hentschel, entries from 17-16 September 1918; *(Reports from the) Meuse-Argonne, September 26-November (11, 1918?)*, 3.

For the 313th Infantry, advancing on the left side of the divisional area of operations, movement began slowly. This terrain, which for this point had been a no-man's land for years, showed the results of heavy fighting. Destroyed trees, undergrowth, barbed wire, and no trafficable roads greeted the infantrymen as they poured over the top at 0530. The pockmarked, wet terrain, made worse by the American barrage that morning, the result of which "retarded progress by human beings on foot to a snail's pace."¹⁵⁴

Initially, the Americans faced little enemy opposition and found the first enemy trench system nearly deserted. The men of the 313th continued. "Aside from a scattered machine gun here and there, an isolated pill box, or a lone sniper cracking away from some point of vantage overhead, there was little to check the advance except the terrible condition of the ground."¹⁵⁵ It was this shattered ground that slowed the movement of the 313th and separated them from their artillery barrage. Unfortunately, the slowing of the barrage to 100 yards every five minutes was still not enough, and the men watched as it crept further and further away. It wasn't long before visual contact and the benefits of the barrage were lost, and by 0800, the barrage was over a mile ahead of the front line of the 79th.¹⁵⁶

By 0900, the 313th had advanced through the concealment of the Bois de Malancourt and entered the open terrain to its north, the Golfe de Malancourt. It was here, across an opening that sloped uphill with some wooded terrain one kilometer

¹⁵⁴Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 85.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Colby, 133.

across, that the Germans made their first stand and checked the movement of the advancing Americans. The men of the 313th had now reached the German second line trenches at the Hagen Stellung Nord—a trench system protected by barbed wire and numerous hardened machine gun positions with interlocking fields of fire. As if these positions were not formidable enough, German machine guns placed in overwatch positions, concealed just behind the trenches in the vegetation of the Bois de Cuisy, added another layer of protection. While concealed at the northern end of the Bois de Malancourt, the Soldiers of the 313th organized, evaluated the situation, and spent the next five hours conducting frontal assault after frontal assault, gaining nothing but casualties.

There were three key reasons for the delay of the 313th and their difficulty in breaching the Hagen Stellung Nord. First, the lateral boundaries assigned to the regiment greatly restricted the maneuver of the 313th. The two and a half kilometers front allotted to the division was divided in half, the left going to the 313th and the right to the 314th, thus further reducing area to maneuver. The 313th was laterally-constricted to just over one kilometer of maneuver area, with a regimental boundary on their right and a divisional boundary on their left, and not in liaison with the units on either side.¹⁵⁷ The planners of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive closely followed British and French “best practices,” cramming an average of 394 riflemen every hundred yards of front across the

¹⁵⁷The difficult terrain and enemy opposition contributed to an unequal advancement of the 313th, the 314th Infantry Regiment on their right, and the 37th Division on their left. This unequal advancement, combined with the difficulty of the terrain, led to the breakdown in lateral communication. Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 87.

entire First Army line.¹⁵⁸ The resultant frontal attacks uphill across open terrain into prepared defensive positions by the infantry were not the tactics of unimaginative, tactically-deficient leaders; rather, they were the only option to advance.

Second, the Germans chose their terrain very well and constructed strong and effective defenses. The lack of cover and concealment afforded to an attacker (U.S. Soldiers) and the need for their enemy to advance uphill through barbed wire, against strongly-constructed positions, interspersed with mutually-supporting machine gun positions with “an almost perfect field of fire for several kilometers in every direction” was typical of German defensive tactics.¹⁵⁹ German machine guns continued to conduct harassing fire on the men of the 313th hidden in the Bois de Malancourt, “continually (raking) the woods with machine-gun fire . . . (which) was taking a continuous toll.”¹⁶⁰ A German map found later showed 113 defensive machine gun positions opposing the 313th in the Golfe de Malancourt; not depicted were the 50 or so more machine guns transported to the line and hastily emplaced.¹⁶¹

The third and foremost reason for the delay of the 79th in taking the Hagen Stellung Nord was the lack of effective indirect fire support. As mentioned earlier, the artillery allotted directly to the 79th Division, all thirty-five batteries, fired in support of the rolling barrage according to a pre-set time schedule. A combination of poor communications between the infantry and the artillery, a lack of understanding and

¹⁵⁸Colby, 133.

¹⁵⁹Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 87.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

experience in combined-arms operations by the division, and the inability to slow the pace of the barrage, regardless of the progress (or lack thereof) of the infantry, quickly minimized the effectiveness of the barrage. Even though the barrage paused and fired for ten minutes on the defenses of the Hagen Stellung Nord, the strength of German fortifications left their defenses mostly intact.¹⁶² Additionally, the time lapse from the fires until the arrival of the infantry permitted the Germans to emerge from their hardened positions and assume a defensive posture.

Prior to the battle, the American planners understood the strength of the German defenses along the Hagen Stellung Nord and allocated a regiment of artillery to fire in direct support of the 313th during its seizure. The 75mm guns of the 147th Artillery Regiment were to have ceased fire at 0800 and advance to provide direct support to the 313th Infantry, but were unable to move forward due to the congestion of Fourth and 79th Division traffic along the only trafficable route forward.¹⁶³ The only indirect fire assets that the 313th possessed were six three-inch Stokes mortars, the lightest mortars used by the U.S. Army. The six Stokes mortars organic to each infantry regiment, in addition to rifle and machine gun fire, were the only high-explosive that could range across the open terrain to reach the German trenches, pillboxes, and machine guns of the German defenders. Compared to the heavier guns to their rear, the mortars were relatively puny weapons, and the need for men to manually carry mortar rounds limited

¹⁶²Ibid., 86.

¹⁶³Raymond S. Thompkins, *Maryland Fighters in the Great War* (Baltimore: Thomas and Evans Printing Co., 1919), 84-85; Carl Penner, Frederic Sammond, and H. M. Appel, *The 120th Field Artillery Diary: 1880-1919* (Milwaukee: Hammersmith-Kortmeyer Co., 1928), 328.

their supply of ammunition. However limited they were, the mortars were the most powerful weapon against hardened targets in the arsenal of the 313th, and their employment by the 313th destroyed several German bunkers.¹⁶⁴

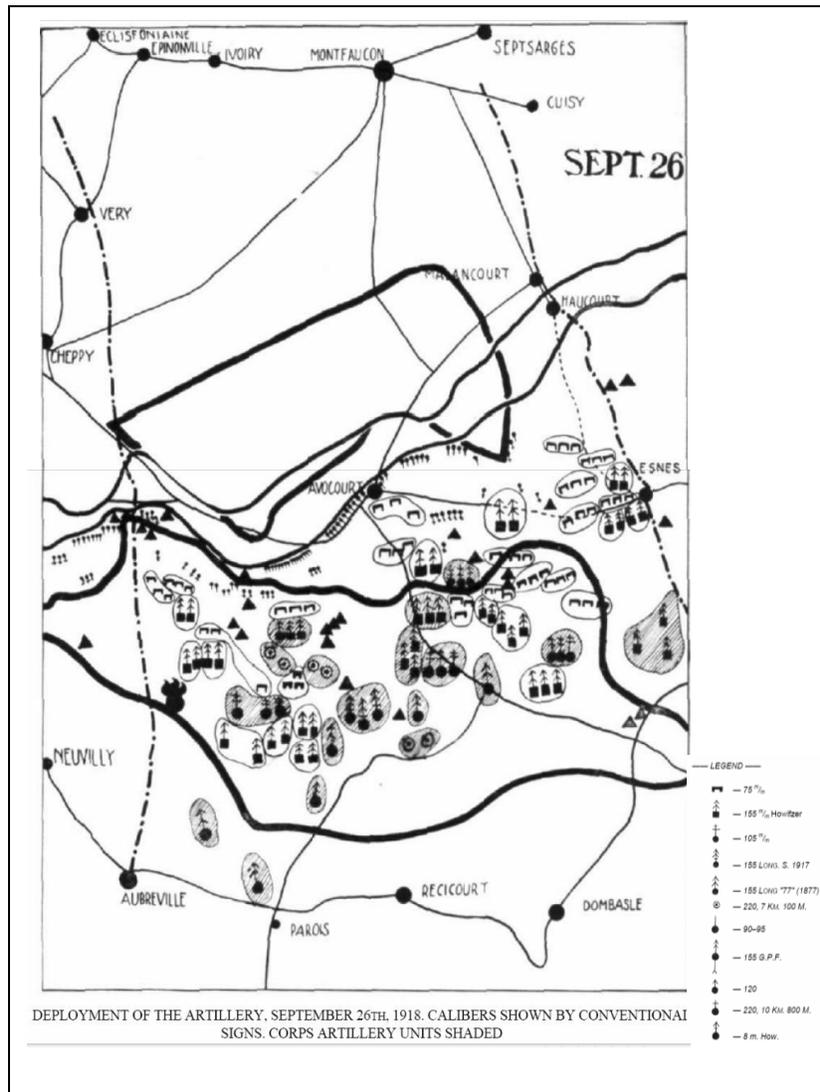


Figure 4. Artillery positions in V Corps AOR, 26 September 1918
 Source: W. E. Shepherd, "The Employment of the Artillery—Fifth Army Corps—Argonne-Meuse Operations," *Field Artillery Journal* 9, no. 2 (April-June 1919): 183, 185.

¹⁶⁴Veterans of Company M, 6.

The experiences of the 79th Division in infantry-artillery combined arms operations were not unique to their formation; rather, the rest of the AEF experienced them as well. The 79th planned their artillery according to the common practices of the time, beginning with all guns firing a rolling barrage, using heavy guns to fire on fixed enemy defenses and counter-battery fires, and using light guns to advance behind the infantry.¹⁶⁵ Beginning at 0530 on 26 September 1918, all divisional guns fired a rolling barrage, pausing their advance only to concentrate fires on German strong points. Meanwhile, corps and army-level artillery focused on counter-battery artillery and targets such as the defenses of Montfaucon.¹⁶⁶ As for the advance of the light guns, the 75mm field guns of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment were to begin their advance once the pace of the infantry had exceeded their (the 75mm guns') range. As far as the planning for artillery support, the overall scheme of maneuver was in accordance with the techniques of the time.

In 1918, the greatest limitation to combined arms operations between infantry and artillery were communications. No one nation had cracked this code, for the technology of the day did not support real-time communications between advancing infantry and their supporting artillery. As a work-around to this problem, an article in the September 1917 edition of the *Infantry Journal* highlighted three means of liaison used to conduct necessary combined arms operations between infantry and artillery: liaison of sight,

¹⁶⁵C. J. C. Street, "Use and Importance of Artillery in Modern Warfare," *Infantry Journal* 15, no. 1 (July 1918): 61-62, 64; Thompkins, 78.

¹⁶⁶Spaulding, 233.

material liaison, and professional liaison; none of which were used effectively by the 79th and 57th.¹⁶⁷

The first means, liaison of sight, relied on the use of field glasses, periscopes, or balloons. However, an analysis of maps and depictions of battery locations during the advance on 26 September indicates that the positioning of the artillery in rear areas and their inability to observe forward positions ruled out the use of sighting devices from the ground.¹⁶⁸ As for balloons, the early morning fog, smoke fired by friendly artillery, and enemy aircraft destroyed at least two and rendered any more ineffective.¹⁶⁹ Finally, the necessity to differentiate friend from foe and the location of all friendly troops over kilometers of rolling terrain interspersed with trees and vegetation, with the additional obscurants of artillery smoke and fog, rendered artillery sighting from the rear difficult at best.

The second means, material liaison, had its limitations as well. The smallest radio system used by the Army at that time weighed in at 440 pounds and therefore not transportable across broken terrain behind the infantry.¹⁷⁰ The only feasible option for voice communications were field telephones, which were often ineffective. Field telephones relied on the use of wire, often several kilometers long, which was subject to

¹⁶⁷“Cooperation of Infantry and Field Artillery,” *Infantry Journal* 14, no. 3 (September 1917): 170.

¹⁶⁸Shepherd, 183, 185. Positions of artillery obtained from a map depicting V Corps artillery (divisional and corps) on 26 September.

¹⁶⁹Penner, 328.

¹⁷⁰Collins, 194, 203-206; United States Army War Department, *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Field Artillery of the Army of the United States, 1917*, 2: 211.

severance. Severances from artillery fire, bypassed enemy personnel, vehicles and horses along lines of communication, or simply advancing infantryman often disrupted communications and required constant troubleshooting and maintenance. The use of couriers, the standard of communications since ancient times, was impracticable as well. The advance of infantry caused both changes in location of command posts and resultant latency of request due to time required for messengers to travel, both rendering the information useless.¹⁷¹ Other methods used by the 79th, such as the use of carrier pigeons and spotter aircraft, were susceptible to latency and misinformation, respectively, and therefore unreliable as well.

The third and most reliable means of liaison noted was professional liaison. It was in this category that the greatest barrier to the conduct of combined arms operations between the 79th Division and 57th Field Artillery Brigade existed. Professional liaison was the result of extensive training between the infantry and artillery in combined arms operations, as well as the development of a habitual relationship between the two elements. The pairing of the 79th Division with an unfamiliar artillery brigade was not unheard of. Of the AEF divisions that began the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, “four of the nine were supported by divisional artillery with which they had never served.”¹⁷² Lessons from this fight and others contributed to a postwar artillery study, published in the *Field Artillery Journal*, which stated:

¹⁷¹“Cooperation of Infantry and Field Artillery,” 170.

¹⁷²American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938), 173.

We have been shown repeatedly during this war how indispensable it is to have close cooperation between the combat arms. . . . Cooperation is assured only where it has become a habit. It becomes a habit only when the arms are continually associated together in practice, and when personal acquaintance and mutual confidence have been established.¹⁷³

As stated in previous chapters, the 57th Artillery Brigade may have had the most experience of any artillery brigade in the AEF, but the infantrymen of the 79th Division had no experience in infantry-artillery combined arms operations. Without this understanding of artillery operations and with the absence of a habitual relationship, it is evident why combined arms operations between the two units were just not possible.

While the 313th fought against strong German opposition on the left, the 314th Infantry faced its own problems on the right. Like the 313th, the 314th faced difficult terrain, and eventually lost contact with their barrage. The combination of morning fog and smoke (generated by an attached company of the First Gas Regiment) was initially a welcome obscurant that assisted in the maneuver of the men of the 314th, but later proved problematic. The reduced visibility, combined with instructions for the men to maintain ten to fifteen meter intervals, caused units to intermingle, creating problems with command and control of the advancing forces and subsequent lapses in terrain coverage.¹⁷⁴ In the poor visibility, the men continued their advance with very light opposition, forming ad-hoc units and inadvertently bypassing several German strongpoints in the fog. When the smoke drifted away and the fog burned off around 1000, the German machine guns began firing. Not only were the men of the 314th

¹⁷³“An Artillery Study Made in the AEF,” *Field Artillery Journal* 10, no. 1 (January-February 1920), Arthur F. Cassels, ed.: 53.

¹⁷⁴Thorn, 27.

receiving fire from the front, but from bypassed machine guns in the rear as well as positions to their right in the Fourth Divisions' sector. These bypassed guns created a one kilometer-plus divide in the forces of the 314th, with the Second Battalion (along with elements of the 315th Infantry that had lost their unit in the earlier smog) advancing to a point parallel with the Bois de Cuisy and the trail elements pinned down near Malancourt. By 1400, the regiment reached its limit of advance and would began digging in for the evening shortly thereafter.

The problems the 79th experienced in command and control and bypassed enemy positions were not due to a lack of training or experience, and were certainly not unique to the men of the 79th. The threat of German artillery, grenades, and machine guns necessitated the large intervals between the Soldiers, and subsequently contributed to lapses in coverage of the terrain and loss of command and control. Adjacent sectors reported low visibility as well, with a Soldier of the 35th Division describing visibility as “possible to see 40 yards at times, but beyond that the fog shut in like a wall.”¹⁷⁵ Accounts from other divisions describe the smog as obscuring landmarks and forcing navigation by compass, units intermingling and the formation of ad-hoc organizations, bypassed enemy positions, and navigation errors leading units out of their divisional sector.¹⁷⁶ So many German positions were bypassed by the First Army on the morning of the 26th that they began to hold up progress, resulting in GEN Pershing sending out an order on the night of 26/27 September ordering “detachments of sufficient size will be left behind to engage isolated strong points which will be turned and not be permitted to

¹⁷⁵Kenamore, 94.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 95, 100-02; Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 309.

hold up or delay the advance of the entire brigade or division.”¹⁷⁷ The combination of smoke and fog not only wrecked havoc on the 79th Division, but the rest of the First Army as well.

Back on the left side of the sector, the light French tanks designated to advance with the infantry had fought through the terrain and arrived at the Golfe de Malancourt, providing the 313th much-needed assistance. Most of the men of the 79th had never seen a tank prior to combat, with one remarking (on 22 September 1918) “Suddenly, a black rattling monster loomed up before us almost filling the road completely. This was the first time we had seen on one of those gigantic tanks we had heard so much about.”¹⁷⁸ Fortunately for the men of the 79th, their lack of training in combined arms operations with armor had no ill effects. With the help of the tanks and from elements of the 314th attacking to their right, the 313th conducted a successful frontal assault on the Hagen Stellung Nord and drove the Germans from their positions. After nearly five hours of failed attacks, the first infantry-armor combined arms operation undertaken by the 313th broke the deadlock and allowed them to resume their advance.

By 1800, after having fought through the “outpost zone” of German defenses strung across four kilometers of difficult terrain, the 79th’s attack began to culminate.¹⁷⁹ The furthest point of advance of the division, the northern edge of the Bois de Cuisy, offered the last concealment prior to advancing across two kilometers of open terrain to

¹⁷⁷Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 106.

¹⁷⁸Kress, 36.

¹⁷⁹“History of the Fifth American Army Corps,” 3.

Montfaucon. The Germans had chosen their terrain wisely, and the men of the 313th knew that the heaviest fighting to date was in front of them.

The regimental commander of the 313th, COL Claude Sweezey, now gauged his situation and ordered his men to construct defensive positions for the night. Sweezey's decision was logical. The men of his regiment spent the last twelve hours fighting across difficult terrain through heavy German defenses, had endured significant losses (including all but one of the battalion commanders killed), had no communications with their brigade, were out of the range of their artillery, and were facing the defenses of Montfaucon itself.¹⁸⁰ Despite this, a surprise was in store for the regiment.

Shortly after they began digging in, the 313th received an order to attack Montfaucon. Against his personal preferences, Sweezey hastily formed a plan for the 313th to assault the most formidable defensive position encountered by any division that day across two kilometers of open terrain, supported by a handful of French light tanks.¹⁸¹ Repeating the successes of the infantry-armor operations conducted hours earlier, the attack of American infantrymen and French tanks was not easy, but it was initially successful. Within 45 minutes of the start of the attack, a majority of the infantry had advanced nearly one kilometer, with one company advancing nearly two kilometers and reaching the outskirts of Montfaucon. The advance of the infantry continued until the French commander, refusing to fight at night, withdrew his tanks.¹⁸² Sweezey, realizing

¹⁸⁰Thorn, 30.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 30; Thompkins, 84, 87; Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 102. The exact number of tanks used to support this attack is not clear, with sources citing anywhere from two to eight tanks.

¹⁸²Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 102.

the futility of continuing without adequate support, stopped his advance and withdrew his forces back to the Bois de Cuisy.

By the end of the day, the 79th posted gains of nearly three kilometers of difficult terrain through some of the strongest German defenses encountered in the entire First Army area of operations. Comparatively, elements of the 37th Division on the left had advanced the same distance to the edge of the Bois de Cuisy by 1100, and the Fourth Division on their right had advanced nearly four kilometers to a location north of Cuisy by 0930.¹⁸³ By judging the gains of the day, the 79th appears to have performed poorly on 26 September 1918. However, this benchmark of performance is only correct if the terrain and opposition that faced the three divisions was the same. To assume such would be incorrect.

Throughout their movement through the Bois de Montfaucon, the 37th Division faced relatively little opposition, so little that they were able to advance a battalion-plus sized element to one kilometer southwest of Montfaucon by 1100.¹⁸⁴ Although that battalion was successful, the remainder of the 37th was not, for determined German resistance and difficult terrain slowed their advances. By early afternoon, the forward momentum of the 145th Infantry Regiment, fighting in the center of the 37th Divisions' area of operations, was checked by German machine gun and artillery fire and reduced

¹⁸³Like the 79th Division, the 37th Division first saw combat on 26 September 1918. The Fourth Division, however, had fought at multiple locations for the past two months.

¹⁸⁴The battalion-plus sized element that advanced to one kilometer southwest of Montfaucon consisted of the Second Battalion, 145th Infantry Regiment and two companies from the First Battalion, 146th Infantry Regiment. American Battle Monuments Commission, *37th Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 11.

their gains to positions less than one kilometer north of the Bois de Cuisy.¹⁸⁵ By 1500, in the face of heavy machine gun fire and artillery, the men of the 145th fell back to the concealment of the woods to dig in for the night alongside the men of the 313th. They would not move forward until the next morning.

To the right of the 79th, the Fourth Division faced relatively little opposition and reached their objective early on.¹⁸⁶ Resistance for the first few hours was light, with some moderate fighting south of Cuisy. By 1230, the Fourth had traversed over seven kilometers and reached their objective. Although these gains are impressive, their situation was quite different from their neighbors to the west. The Fourth Division was not as green as the 37th or 79th, having arrived in France in May 1918 and trained under the British.¹⁸⁷ In fact, they were the most experienced division of the nine that began the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, already having amassed two months of combat experience. Finally, their sector was not nearly as heavily defended as that of the 79th, it being one of the easiest of all divisional zones in the entire First Army.¹⁸⁸

Throughout the night of 26-27 September 1918, commanders and staffs from Pershing down began to understand the situation that had unfolded the previous day. Progress varied from sector to sector, with gains of nearly ten kilometers made by the III

¹⁸⁵Ray Neil Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken* (Cleveland, OH: The O.S. Hubbell Printing Co., 1919), 99.

¹⁸⁶Christian Albert Bach and Henry Noble Hall, *The Fourth Division* (1920), 164.

¹⁸⁷American Battlefield Monuments Commission, *Fourth Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 4.

¹⁸⁸Joseph L. Turner, "A Study of the Operations of the Fourth Division in the First Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, 26 September to 2 October, 1918" (student paper, Fort Leavenworth, 1932), 12.

Corps on the right and as little as two made by the 77th Division on the left.¹⁸⁹ The progress of the 79th, however, was critical due to their position in the center of the First Army's drive. The slow advance of the 79th Division had not only slowed the advance of the Fourth Division and III Corps to their right, but the entire First Army as well. This resulted in the desperate issue of orders made without situational understanding (due not only to lack of proximity but also poor communications and incorrect information), with little thought, and based more on desperation and frustration than logic.

Just before midnight on 26 September 1918, V Corps Chief of Staff, BG Wilson B. Burt, issued the following order to the 79th Division, "Commander in Chief expects 79th Division to advance tonight to position abreast of Fourth Div. in the vicinity of Nantillois."¹⁹⁰ This order, implying lack of effort by the 79th, was made in a command post miles removed from the fighting and without adequate situational understanding. Whatever the case, the 79th received the order just before midnight, followed by an order to all units of the AEF shortly thereafter, stating

The enemy is in retreat or holding lightly in places, and advance elements of several divisions are already on First Army objectives and there should be no delay or hesitation in going forward. Detachments of sufficient size will be left behind to engage isolated strong points which will be turned and not be permitted to hold up or delay the advance of the entire brigade or division. All officers will push their units forward with all possible energy.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹Once again, this does not take opposition or terrain into account. For example, the objectives for the 77th Division on 26 September were between two and four kilometers, and their progress, or lack thereof, would have little effect on the rest of the First Army.

¹⁹⁰Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 106.

¹⁹¹Order issued by General John J. Pershing, night of 26-27 September 1918. Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 106.

MG Kuhn communicated the order to continue the advance to BG Robert H. Noble of the 158th Infantry Brigade (the divisional reserve, consisting of the 315th and 316th Infantry) at 0222 and to BG William J. Nicholson (157th Brigade, consisting of the 313th and 314th Infantry) at 0453. The two hour delay in notification of the divisions' main effort was once again due to poor communications.¹⁹²

Not only were the delays in taking Montfaucon results of undertrained Soldiers and battlefield conditions, but of blunders at the division and above level as well. The first mistake is that the First Army and AEF set unrealistic objectives. The plan was for nine U.S. Army divisions, five of which had no prior combat experience and four of which were supported by unfamiliar artillery, to cross nine kilometers of terrain against two fortified defensive positions in one day.¹⁹³ The objective of the 79th for the first day, Nantillois, would have forced the 79th Division (and V Corps as a whole) to advance nearly ten kilometers during their first eighteen hours in combat.¹⁹⁴ The advance of the 79th was templated over both open and wooded terrain with the support of one northbound road, portions of which were shared with the neighboring Fourth Division.¹⁹⁵ Opposing this move were two major German defensive positions: the Hagen Stellung and the Giselher Stellung.¹⁹⁶ The U.S. Army generally understood the strength of the German

¹⁹²Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 107-08.

¹⁹³Ibid., 173.

¹⁹⁴American Battle Monuments Commission, *79th Division Summary of Operations in the World War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 11.

¹⁹⁵Stallings, 235.

¹⁹⁶The sector that the 77th Division attacked across contained two other subdivisions of these three defensive positions, the Wiesenschlenken Stellung and the

defensive positions prior to the attack. So even without the benefit of hindsight, it was clear during mission planning that the objectives set for the first day were completely unrealistic.

Second, the plan for all divisions to advance on a line, without consideration given to the enemy, terrain, or experience or ability of divisions (troops) indicates those who crafted the plan were men who dreamed big and did not pay attention to details. First and foremost, lack of creativity and application of sound tactics of maneuver in the face of enemy defenses are evident in the plan of attack. Originally, the intent of the drive included bypassing Montfaucon to the east and west, followed by an encirclement, thus forcing capitulation of the garrison without direct engagement.¹⁹⁷ This was in the initial order given to divisions, but so vaguely worded and open to interpretation that it did not materialize. When the III Corps order to attack reached the Fourth Division Chief of Staff, COL Christian A. Bach, remarked that the section of the corps order as to how the Fourth Division would assist the 79th in the capture of Montfaucon was

“as clear as mud.” In his draft of the division order, he attempted to clarify the role by specifying that the Fourth would envelope Montfaucon from the north and the east, but the corps chief of staff, BG Alfred W. Bjornstad, revised the division order to read that the Fourth would aid the 79th “not by an advance into the area of the division on its left but by steady progression to the front.”¹⁹⁸

Giselher Stellung. American Battlefield Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 170.

¹⁹⁷American Battlefield Monuments Commission, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 172; Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing* Vol. 2 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 957.

¹⁹⁸Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 308-09.

In the end, the original intent of encirclement of Montfaucon was lost and the plan defaulted to a direct frontal assault.

Third, divisions, corps, and First Army were not able to exploit unanticipated successes. By 1100 on 26 September, nearly two battalions of the 37th Division advanced to within one kilometer of Montfaucon, and sent patrols to the outskirts of the town. Later that evening, a battalion advanced to a point 400 meters south of Montfaucon, within the zone of the 79th Division.¹⁹⁹ In the case of the latter advance (at 1830), had coordination between divisions been present, the men of the 37th could have assisted the 313th, bogged down one and a half kilometers to their south, by firing into the backs of the German positions. Although the reasons for not attacking Montfaucon or assisting the 79th are not known, it is likely that poor communications and lack of situational awareness at division level and above resulted in lost opportunities.

Not only was opportunity lost to the left of the 79th, but to the right as well. The Fourth Division, who rapidly advanced by keeping in contact with their barrage through relatively light enemy opposition, lost possibly the greatest opportunities to encircle Montfaucon. The assault battalion of the 47th Infantry Regiment, commanded by MAJ James Stevens, reached their objective one kilometer to the east of Nantillois at 1230 on 26 September 1918, and waited as ordered for the 79th Division to catch up.²⁰⁰ Over the next

¹⁹⁹American Battlefield Monuments Commission, *37th Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 10.

²⁰⁰Nantillois was located three kilometers to the north of Montfaucon. Paschall, 186.

five hours the men of the Fourth waited. During the afternoon, Stevens watched enemy infantry and batteries of artillery move into Nantillois, a little over a mile to his left in the zone of the 79th. He opened fire on them with his machine guns and one-pounders, but his weapons were not match for those of the Germans, who returned the fire with more effect.²⁰¹

Had communications or flexibility in the order facilitated cross-boundary operations, Stevens' battalion may have occupied and defended Nantillois against the incoming German troops and isolated Montfaucon. Thus, the first opportunity to encircle the Germans was lost.

Later in the day, the Fourth Division lost another opportunity to encircle Montfaucon. Upon reaching his forward lines, MG John Hines, the commander of the Fourth Division, developed a plan to capture Nantillois. His intent was for his lead brigade to act as a base of fire element and support the maneuver of his reserve brigade in their assault of Nantillois. MG Hines "telephoned corps headquarters for permission. III Corps chief of staff BG Alfred Bjornstad gave his approval but later retracted it."²⁰² Whether the plan would have worked or not is a matter of speculation, but considering the German system of defense in depth (often with large distances between forces) and the second-class status of the defending German garrison, it is likely that this action would have been successful in forcing the surrender of Montfaucon. Historians can speculate, but who were there made the strongest arguments for its potential for success. The brigade commander of the (planned) assaulting brigade, BG Ewing Booth, "maintained that his troops could have captured this village (Nantillois) and cut off the

²⁰¹Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 310.

²⁰²Ibid.

garrison at Montfaucon.”²⁰³ Likewise, Bjornstad professed to Pershing after the war that he regretted retracting the order to take Nantillois.²⁰⁴ Either way, the lost opportunities of the Fourth Division did nothing to assist the 79th Division and likely led to their eventual frontal assault on the defenses of Montfaucon.

The attack resumed on the morning of the 27th just before 0430 with the 314th advancing forward from Malancourt. Immediately, the machine gun positions encountered the previous day, including in Cuisy (within the sector of the Fourth Division) opened up on the Soldiers. Luckily, the darkness reduced the effectiveness of the German guns and aided the men in their maneuver.²⁰⁵

Unlike the previous day, friendly artillery was available to provide direct support to the infantry. One battalion of light artillery (French 75mm cannons) of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment assumed position and began placing “effective fire on the southern slope of Montfaucon” at 0600.²⁰⁶ At 0700, the 75mms’ changed their mission and fired a rolling barrage, shielding the advance of the infantrymen of the 313th.²⁰⁷ The guns of the 147th were co-located with the 313th Infantry Regiment, permitting timely and accurate adjustment of artillery. Finally, over a year after the division formed and began training, the infantrymen had their first taste of fire control in support of their maneuver; the first true instance of infantry-artillery combined arms operations. As appreciated and

²⁰³Ibid., 308.

²⁰⁴Ibid, 310.

²⁰⁵Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 108.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 110.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

successful as the one battalion of artillery was, traffic jams and poor communications ensured that a majority of the divisional artillery remained silent and out of the fight.

By 27 September, not only were most of the guns task organized under the 79th inactive, misinformation silenced the guns controlled by the corps and First Army as well. The previous afternoon, an erroneous report generated by V Corps to First Army stated that

as of 6.00 P.M. 26 September, the (forward) line (of friendly troops) ran through Montfaucon, led the First Army to prohibit artillery fire over the entire front, except to division artillery, on the assumption, subsequently found to have been erroneous, that the enemy was withdrawing, our troops pursuing, and that the latter might be endangered if artillery fire was continued. This order was not lifted until after several days, during which our troops were badly in need of better artillery support.²⁰⁸

So, over the next eighteen hours, corps artillery withheld fires on the trenches and strongpoints of Montfaucon. Not only did the infantrymen of the 79th continue the fight without the benefit of the corps and First Army artillery, but without their full complement of divisional artillery as well. The trench mortar battery of the 57th Field Artillery Brigade, the 107th Trench Mortar Battery, was detached from the brigade and located at a rest area behind the Oise-Ainse front, where they remained for a majority of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.²⁰⁹ The mortars were not left out of ignorance of their value; rather, they sat out the fighting due to their lack of mobility. In 1918, no Allied nation possessed a mortar capable of maintaining the rate of advance of attacking

²⁰⁸Conrad H. Lanza, "The Artillery in Support of the Infantry in the AEF," *Field Artillery Journal* 36, no. 1 (January-February 1936): 70.

²⁰⁹P. H. Ottosen, ed, *Trench Artillery in the AEF: The Personal Experiences of Lieutenants and Captains of Artillery who served with Trench Mortars* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., 1931), 117-120.

infantry.²¹⁰ The brigade commander described the mortars of the 107th Trench Mortar Battery as “an obsolete type of French mortar, for which little use could be found.”²¹¹ In the end, a multitude of reasons contributed to the shortage of artillery for the infantry in their capture of Montfaucon. Perhaps the best summary came from the future commander of V Corps, MG Charles P. Summerall, who described the artillery support given to the men fighting for Montfaucon as “flagrantly insufficient.”²¹²

The assault by the 313th, supported by artillery and six French light tanks, proceeded forward into the two kilometer killing zone leading up to Montfaucon.²¹³ First leading down into a ravine and then uphill for the last kilometer, the area was nearly completely open, with little to no cover or concealment. Additionally, German artillery from three positions fired on plotted points, with observers on Montfaucon and other high ground directing fires.²¹⁴ Under questioning, a captured German machine gunner alerted the 79th of three machine gun positions in front of Montfaucon, with another thirty-two on the slopes leading up to the town.²¹⁵ Against these and other German positions, the men of the 313th and 314th continued to advance, and reached the outskirts of town by 1100.

²¹⁰Charles W. Elliot, “Trench Artillery Support for Infantry,” *Infantry Journal* 26, no. 16 (March 1920): 775.

²¹¹George L. Irwin, “Notes on the Training and Handling of Divisional Artillery in France,” *The Field Artillery Journal* 9, no. 5 (November-December 1919): 492-3.

²¹²Colby, 134.

²¹³Thorn, 31.

²¹⁴Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 110-11.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*, 112.

Over the next forty-five minutes, the men of the 313th and 314th Infantry fought through the town, clearing it of the defending Germans. Shortly thereafter, COL Sweezey of the 313th established his command post on the eastern slope and attached the following message to a carrier pigeon, “Montfaucon captured 11:45. Request one hour artillery concentration (on the) Bois de Beuge to lift at sixteen hundred hours.”²¹⁶ This message was attached to a carrier pigeon that flew fourteen miles in one hour and forty-three minutes, arriving with “its left wing torn and bleeding.”²¹⁷ As seen the previous day, communication problems continued to plague the 79th Division. The message sent on Pigeon #47 was logged at the pigeon loft, but was lost somewhere between there and the division commander. It was not until the arrival of a courier dispatched by COL Sweezey arrived with a separate message that MG Kuhn heard of the fall of Montfaucon.²¹⁸ Over twenty-four hours after the fight began, the men of the 79th captured Montfaucon . . . and continued moving forward.

²¹⁶Ibid.

²¹⁷John N. Rich, *The History of Company C, 304th Field Signal Battalion*, ed. History Committed of Company C, 304th Signal Battalion, 137.

²¹⁸Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 113.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After a review of the circumstances that led to the delay of the 79th in their capture of Montfaucon, a clearer picture emerges of why this happened. Compared to the eight other U.S. divisions that began the Meuse-Argonne Offensive alongside it, the 79th Division performed at an average level. On one end of the spectrum, the Fourth Division, which had first entered combat in mid-July 1918, advanced much further than the rest of the U.S. divisions. On the other end, the 35th Division essentially collapsed after several days in combat, albeit their opposition and leadership challenges were greater than most.²¹⁹ In between were divisions such as the 79th, who faltered on their advance on Montfaucon, as well as 77th Division, who managed to advance only two miles by 28 September 1918. To the left of the 79th, the 37th Division, advancing through woods that offered cover and concealment not afforded to the 79th, made the same gains as the 79th for the first two days of the Meuse-Argonne campaign. By the end of the first day of the attack on 26 September 1918, the 77th Division and 28th Division of I Corps had both advanced less than the 79th Division.²²⁰

Unfortunately for the 79th, their position in the center of the advance ensured their performance received more attention than any other divisions. Additionally, the multiple incorrect reports sent by V Corps to First Army in the evening of 26 September

²¹⁹Robert H. Ferrell, *Collapse at the Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), 21.

²²⁰Stallings, 229.

1918 that Montfaucon had fallen only served to exacerbate the situation.²²¹ Whatever the case, the memo sent by V Corps citing Pershing's guidance to immediately take Montfaucon (just before midnight on 26 September) and Pershing's message shortly thereafter publicly placed blame on the 79th for the entire First Army's failure to reach their first days' objectives.²²²

In the end, history judged the 79th Division as having failed to complete their objective for two main reasons. The first and most critical reason is the message sent from Pershing to V Corps, "ordering the advance to be pushed with all possible energy, and directing that isolated strongpoints left by the retreating enemy should be engaged and reduced by forces left behind for that purpose."²²³ The men of the 79th may have easily interpreted this message as a direct reference to the performance of the division, who slowed under the fire of German machine guns passed in the morning fog of 26 September 1918.²²⁴ By 1400 on 26 September 1918, the Fourth Division had advanced four kilometers further than the 79th, creating a notable gap on the maps of the First Army. This gap may not have received as much attention if it were within one corps area of operations, but since it was in the center and opened the left flank of the Fourth

²²¹Colby, 135.

²²²Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 106.

²²³American Battlefield Monuments Commission, *79th Division Summary of Operations in the World War*, 15.

²²⁴Pershing sent this message within one hour of the V Corps sending a desperate message to the 79th to advance at once. Comparing the similarity of content of the messages, the message sent by Pershing appears to serve first as instructions to the slow-moving 79th division as well as general instructions to the entire AEF

Division, it delayed the advance of the entire III Corps. Needless to say, in the eyes of the III Corps, the shortcomings of the V Corps were limiting their advance.

Why the 79th Faltered

While history has unfairly labeled the 79th Division in terms of their efforts in capturing Montfaucon, the fact remains that they did not fulfill their opening day objective in accordance with the published timeline. This was not only due to one singular factor; rather, it was the result of many. A combination of mission, enemy, terrain, and troop challenges and shortcomings resulted in not only the loss of one day in the progress of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, but also the lives of many men of the 79th Division. The lessons of the effects of the shortcomings of this fight are as valid today as they were in 1918.

First, the mission of a direct frontal-assault against the fortifications of Montfaucon with little room to conduct lateral maneuver was too difficult to accomplish within the time allocated. The most difficult objective given to any First Army division on 26 September, Montfaucon, was believed by the Germans to be impenetrable and by the French to take at least three months to overcome.²²⁵ The tactical plan of advance straight through the German defenses was also nearly thoughtless, with the more tactically-sound plan of encirclement being lost somewhere in the transition from commanders intent for the mission to execution.

²²⁵Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 59; Pogue, 182; Stallings, 230.

Second, the actual defenses were well-constructed, deep, and strong. The Germans had, over the course of four years, created an effective, well-thought out defensive plan with excellent observation, clear fields of fire, and hundreds of mutually-supportive strong points, all multiple layers deep. The strength of “Little Gibraltar” was as tactically difficult of an objective as one could imagine. Were it not for the depleted state of the German Army in September 1918, the 79th Division may have spent weeks or greater to accomplish a task that took them two days.

Third, the terrain faced by the men of the 79th was difficult at best. Uneven and muddy terrain across open fields of fire turned the infantrymen of the 79th into slow-moving targets for German machine gunners and snipers. After their advance through the German outpost zone and when encountering defenses where artillery was absolutely vital, the destroyed road network did not support the throughput of men, guns, and supplies necessary to adequately support operations. It was these road networks that denied the men adequate light artillery (75mm guns) support they required.

Finally, challenging the difficulty of the mission as the greatest obstacle the 79th faced is the issue of the quality of the Soldiers. They were undertrained—especially the NCOs and company-grade officers. When the Meuse-Argonne Offensive began, two-thirds of the division had less than four months in the Army. As the 20th century American author James M. Cain wrote, “The training given at Prauthoy was inadequate for battle conditions. . . . Few of us had any idea of what we would be called upon to do, or the conditions under which we would do it . . . for most it was an entirely new game,

and we knew neither the rules nor the positions we were supposed to play.”²²⁶ A majority of the company-grade officer corps, who were the primary trainers of the division, had slightly more experience than those whom they trained. The continual transfer of trained men and backfill of raw recruits while at Camp Meade ensured that rather than reach an advanced stage of training after nine months at Camp Meade, the course of instruction was required to repeat every time new recruits arrived. The mass influx of recruits and lack of rifle training in France also reduced the effectiveness of the primary weapon system of the 79th, the rifle, to somewhere around 33 percent. In the end, the 79th Division did not train for nine months; rather, it trained for three months three times.

In training, the greatest deficiency was the lack of conduct of training on combined arms training with artillery. At no time at Camp Meade or Training Area Ten did the infantry conduct live fire maneuvers with the infantry, and the assignment of the 57th Brigade to support the 79th Division just days before their attack did not allow for time to develop a habitual relationship. It was not until their introduction to combat on 26 September 1918 that the men of the 79th experienced their first combined arms operation with artillery. Unfortunately, rather than learn lessons in a consequence-free environment, the Germans would make the infantrymen pay for their shortcomings.

After the Battle

In the days that followed the capture of Montfaucon, the 79th continued to struggle against the now-reinforced German defenders, eventually taking the town of Nantillois. During this timeframe, the division faltered again and again in the execution

²²⁶James M. Cain and Gilbert Malcolm, *79th Division Headquarters Troop, A Record* (1919), 15.

of infantry-artillery combined arms operations. This was as much a result of poor understanding of cooperation between the arms as well as traffic-packed roads preventing the artillery from moving forward. On 30 September 1918, the Third Division relieved the tired and hungry men of the 79th. After relief, the 79th spent a majority of October conducting defensive operations in the Tryon sector.

Exactly why the AEF sent the 79th to the Tryon sector remains unclear, but it suggests the AEFs' lack of satisfaction in the performance of the division. Considering that AEF divisions were built at twice the size of British and French divisions in order to increase the staying power in combat, the removal of a division on the fifth day of combat indicates a lack of faith in performance and abilities. It is likely that the AEF sent the 79th to a quiet sector to conduct defensive operations so it could begin a recovery from the operations on 26-30 September 1918, learn from and improve upon its mistakes, as well as to free up a more capable division for offensive operations. Whatever the case, the 79th spent October in a relatively quiet sector with nothing more than localized actions.

After a comparatively slow month in October, the division would finish the war where they started: in the Meuse-Argonne region. On 26 October 1918, the 79th relieved the 29th and part of the 26th Divisions in the vicinity of Consenvoye. Offensive operations resumed on the morning of 3 November 1918 and continued until 1100 on 11 November 1918, with more ground taken and less casualties experienced in these eight days than during the five days of fighting in and around Montfaucon.²²⁷

²²⁷Historical Committee of the 79th Division Association, 424-25.

Lessons Learned

From the story of the 79th Division, many lessons may be learned. First, the most important portion of the plan is the details, and the shortcomings of staff officers' results in blood spilled by Soldiers. The lack of clarity in the mission statement from III Corps as to how the Fourth Division would support the 79th's scheme of maneuver resulted in the intent of encirclement of Montfaucon changing to a direct-frontal assault. The miscommunication was possibly nothing more than misinterpretation of commanders' intent after passing through several layers of staff officers. Within large organizations, misinterpretations are inevitable. However, commanders may reduce miscommunication of their intent through back briefs as well as the application of troop leading procedures, especially the final step of "supervise."²²⁸

Second, moving beyond the planning, the issuance of orders without adequate situational understanding is ineffective and often harmful. Fortunately, Army leaders embraced this concept and developed more of a centralized planning, decentralized execution style of leadership, resulting in the eventual change of "command and control" to "mission command." This doctrinal change emphasizes the trust of subordinate leaders to fulfill mission and commanders intent with minimal interference from above. This allows subordinate leaders to judge their circumstances and more effectively fight the enemy while minimizing the effort spent fighting the plan.

Third, and most importantly, a lack of military preparedness comes at the cost of the timely deployment of a trained and ready force. The growth of the U.S. Army to

²²⁸In this sense, supervise refers to the orders generation process and the commander ensuring that his intent remains from the beginning of orders production to execution.

twenty times its prewar size resulted in a lack of equipment for training, lack of trainers, lack of qualified leaders, and, most importantly, lack of experience in all ranks. Not only were Soldiers untrained in their individual tasks, but leaders were not trained to lead nor to work with other arms, most notably artillery. The outbreak of World War II again saw a massive growth in the size of the Army, but this time the lessons learned from World War I were applied. While not every Soldier who fought in World War II was adequately trained, the Army was able to conduct training that was more effective, more rapidly and effectively provide industrial support to the military, and field formations more experienced than those of the previous war.

In the end, the story of the 79th and their capture of Montfaucon is symbolic of the tragic losses of the Great War, and it is unfortunate that the 79th stands out amongst the AEF for not only its performance on the first two days of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, but also for the last act of any nation in the Great War. On 11 November, 1918, Private (PVT) Henry Gunther of the 313th Infantry Regiment charged a German machine gun nest with his bayonet, resulting in his death from a five-round German burst. Later that day, GEN Pershing would acknowledge his death at 1059 on 11 November 1918 as the last Soldier killed in the Great War.²²⁹

²²⁹Joseph E. Persico, *Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour: Armistice Day, 1918: World War I and its Violent Climax* (New York: Random House, 2004), 351.

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